

# *Elementary English*

MARIE HALL ETS

JOHNNY LEARNS TO READ

DEVELOPING SENTENCE SENSE

READING PROBLEMS OF THE GIFTED

ORGAN OF THE

NATIONAL

COUNCIL

OF

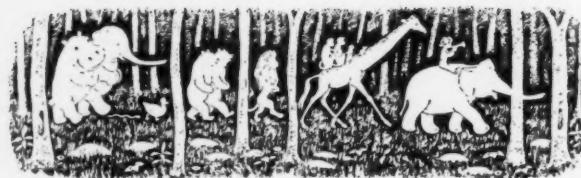
TEACHERS

OF

ENGLISH

★

MAY,  
1956.



From Marie Hall Ets, *Another Day*

# Elementary ENGLISH

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# *An Open Letter to Members and Subscribers to Elementary English*

May 1, 1956

Dear Friends:

Last year I made a special appeal to you to renew your membership and/or subscription during May or June. Your response was tremendously gratifying. Many thousands of you immediately renewed your memberships and subscriptions for the 1955-56 school year. The result? You received your copies of *Elementary English* this past fall without interruption. (You also relieved much mental strain on the part of the headquarters staff, as we managed to keep up with the huge influx of fall mail much better.)

I believe that I owe you an explanation for requesting that you renew early. Each fall, NCTE sends out a large mailing for new members and subscribers. The mailing for the fall of 1956 is to be the largest in NCTE's history. The campaign materials are mailed on the Friday before Labor Day, and by September 10, mail comes pouring in by the sackful, requesting memberships and subscriptions. If we already have your renewal processed, we can concentrate on the new members, instead of trying to keep up with renewals and new applications at the same time.

If you have received a renewal notice lately, or if you receive one in the near future, please send it back with your remittance this month, or next. You will be helping us to serve you better.

Cordially,

*Lawrence E. Connolly*

Lawrence E. Connolly  
Business Manager

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

704 SOUTH SIXTH STREET · · · · · CHAMPAIGN, ILLINOIS

*By Way of Introduction . . .*

Like many other articles in our series on children's authors, the one by MRS. RUTH IRVINE on Marie Hall Ets is the product of work in a college class in children's literature. Mrs. Irvine, a student of Professor Leland B. Jacobs, is a graduate of Barnard College.

Most of us are a little weary of the Flesch controversy by this time, but the article, *How Johnny Learns to Read*, is notable because it contains a repudiation of the Flesch viewpoint by two of the very few educators he refers to with approval. SAMUEL A. and WINIFRED D. KIRK give a lucid account of the way children learn to read, in remarkably few words.

The idea of teaching sentence sense by means of pauses and changes of pitch, rather than syntax, may not be a new discovery, but we feel sure that a majority of our readers are not familiar with it. W. WILBUR HATFIELD, retired editor of the *English Journal*, expounds it with clarity and persuasiveness.

It has been suggested that reading retardation is even more prevalent among gifted than among slow-learning children. The article by WALTER B. BARBE describes in detail some of the problems which some gifted children face in learning to read.

Social class as a problem of the school has been discussed in the professional literature only in very recent years. MRS. ETHEL TOMLINSON gives us concrete help in dealing with the language problems of children who come from less privileged homes.

LOUIS ADA WILSON gives valuable

suggestions for the teaching of that elusive but important subject of poetry.

The idea of a class newspaper or magazine is not new, but HAZEL WARD HOFFMAN shows how it can be used effectively in developing language arts abilities.

LOUISE HOVDE MORTENSEN needs no introduction to readers of these pages. She is a regular contributor of good ideas for the elementary school teacher.

JOHN H. TREANOR, who contributes the fine article on listening, is Director of the Language Arts Curriculum Center in the Boston Public Schools. He is currently a member of the Council's Elementary Section Committee. He has contributed many articles to professional magazines, including *Elementary English* and the *English Journal*. Among his publications, one of the most recent is the very interesting workbook, *Familiar Situations—Ideas for Composition*.

Miss LORRAINE D. SUNDAL supplies in this issue one of the first examples of the application of the idea of "levels of usage" to classroom instruction that we have seen in the professional literature.

Critical reading is often regarded as a skill to be taught to older children. WALTER T. PETTY shows that the process may and should be begun in the early grades.

MRS. ALMINA WALLACE has taught bilingual children in New Mexico for several years. Her article on bilingualism will be of great help to teachers in many parts of the country, including the great cities.

# ELEMENTARY ENGLISH

XXXIII

MAY, 1956

No. 5

RUTH R. IRVINE

## Marie Hall Ets - Her Picture Storybooks

Marie Hall Ets' books are the reflection of a many-faceted life. She was born in Wisconsin, one of six children of a doctor who later became a minister. Her childhood love for animals, wild and tame, finds continued expression in the skill and feeling with which she depicts all kinds of animals in text and drawing. Art student, interior decorator, social worker (always with, or for children), the wife of a doctor—from this potpourri emerges an author-artist of remarkable talent, who for the past twenty years has been enriching the field of books for young children. She is a "born storyteller" in tune with the interests and feelings of the very young. She is a delightful artist and knows how to use illustration to complement and enhance her stories. That she has only produced ten books in twenty years is suggestive of the care and thought which have gone into her work.

In any one of her storybooks the reader will find a simple but absorbing plot which is developed to a logical and

satisfying conclusion, involving a situation and characters with natural appeal to children. A happy blend of rhythmic prose, action, humor, pathos, charm, and fantasy is characteristic of her work.

Her illustrations are distinguished by their artistry, composition, pleasant informality, and appropriateness to each story. She captures the subtlety of emotional reaction as well as direct action in her drawings. She is meticulous (but never dull) in the reproduction of detail in the text. She is a master of the medium of black and white and uses it with such strength, richness, and variety that one never wishes for a more colorful palette.

*Mr. Penny* (Viking Press, 1935) has a timeless appeal which belies its early publication date. It is the story of a poor, kindly old man and his large family of mischievous animals. The animals are the familiar farm animals dear to the hearts of

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Mrs. Irvine is a graduate student at Teachers College, Columbia University.



Marie Hall Ets

children. They are conceived with humor and affection. Their frailties and vanities are human and yet related to their species. The family consists of an old horse named Limpy "who used to limp on his right foreleg because he liked to have it rubbed with liniment and tied up in a bandage like a racehorse," Mooloo the cow "who had beautiful eyes, but who never chewed her cud as other cows do because she was too lazy," Splop the goat, Pugwug a pig, Mimkin the lamb, Chukluk a fat hen, and Doody a rooster, "who arched his tail and strutted when he walked."

Mr. Penny is a good father to his family, up before dawn, cleaning the shed and preparing food for them. When he leaves for his daily work in the factory of the Friend-in-Need Safety Pins in the town of Wuddle, he says goodbye to each animal and tells them to be good while he is gone. He asks Doody "to try to be good!" How like any parent leaving his brood for the day! And just as any group of seven children left to their own devices would get into mischief, the animals led on by Doody have a field day in the neighbor's garden. Retribution comes swiftly. The animals are chased away ignominiously by the angry farmer and his bulldog, Doody loses his beautiful tail to the dog, the animals are sick from overeating, and disaster threatens when the irate farmer delivers his ultimatum, that Mr. Penny must either pay for the damage, repair it, or lose his animals. The animals come to the rescue and, working secretly at night, restore the garden and plow the fields. Mooloo chews her cud and gives quarts of milk. Chukluk eats the nasty hen's tonic-and-grit and lays beautiful eggs. Doody follows the plow pulled by Limpy and weighted down by

Pugwug, and picks up worms for Mr. Penny to sell. Mimkim clips the grass, and Splop clears the fields of stones. The animals learn that it is more fun to work than to be lazy. With their help Mr. Penny soon has the most beautiful garden in Wuddle, he is able to retire from his hated job in the factory, and they all live happily and prosperously together.

The illustrations in *Mr. Penny* are vigorous, humorous, expressive, and faithful to the action and mood of the story. In *Mr. Penny* the author demonstrates her gift for devising singularly appropriate and original names for her characters. The names are as distinctive as portraits.

*The Story of a Baby* (Viking Press, 1939) is an extraordinary piece of work and in a class quite by itself. In a large size picture storybook the growth of a baby is described from its beginning as "a life too small to be seen at all," through the many stages of embryonic development, to birth and the baby's first smile. It is a book for parents and children to enjoy together, and it is a particularly beautiful way in which to satisfy a child's curiosity about the origin of babies. Text and illustration are sensitive and scientifically accurate, yet rendered in a manner meaningful to a young child. The changing size of the embryo is given reality to the child by continual comparisons with things the child knows—from the size of the tail of a comma (,), to a kernel of rice, to a pussy-willow bud, to a grandmother's thimble. The chorionic sac is first described as "a house with no windows or doors—a house smaller than a grain of salt from the shaker, or a grain of sand from the beach. But this was a house that could grow, and a house that was going to have roots." In

similar vein and with stately cadence the story of a new life unfolds in all its wonder.

This book has to be seen and read to be fully appreciated. Its enthusiastic endorsement by the *Journal of the American Medical Association* is a tribute to its quality.

A happy return to fiction is effected with *In The Forest* (Viking Press, 1944). This is a story of more subtle fantasy than *Mr. Penny*. Here the author shows great skill in capturing the blend of fancy and matter-of-factness which is



*In the Forest*

found in children's imaginative play. A little boy with a paper hat and a new horn goes for a walk in the forest. There he meets, by ones and twos, wild animals which children all know from storybooks, hearsay, and visits to the zoo. This is the child's happily egocentric, anthropomorphic world. The animals stop whatever they are doing and go along with the boy, but first, each in his way has to get ready, just as a child would for a trip. The lion must comb his hair; the baby elephants stop their bath, dry themselves, and get partially dressed as a very young child would do; the bears stop counting their peanuts and eating jam; the monkeys get "their best suits from a hole in a tree"; the mother and father kangaroos interrupt

the lesson in hopping they were giving their baby; the stork says nothing, but comes too; and the timid rabbit joins the parade on the child's invitation.

Each encounter with a new animal is beautifully developed, with three full-page illustrations and a line or two of text on each page, and tied into the theme of the story by the repetition of the phrase "when I went for a walk in the forest." The animals are good old friends by the time they are seen in a double-page illustration of all eleven of them and the child on their walk. A picnic, with ice cream and cake, and games, is perfectly natural in this make-believe story. The transition back to reality is delightfully handled. Children will appreciate the father who respects his child's fantasy, but takes him safely home to the real world.

*My Dog Rinty* (Viking Press, 1946) was written in collaboration with Ellen Tarry. The story takes place in Harlem and is one of the few better children's books dealing with a minority group. Young readers will enjoy the mischievous dog, Rinty. They will sympathize with the anguish of his young master, David, when the boy's father insists that the dog be sold because of the trouble he causes—following David to school, chewing holes in carpets, and causing inadvertant damage in shops. Children will share David's joy when a reformed Rinty is returned to him and when they learn that Rinty's mischief was really due to his being a born mouser. A warmly satisfying conclusion is reached when David and Rinty win fame and fortune as the Pied Pipers of Harlem.

What could have been a sprightly, entertaining story is weighted down with a brief plea for slum clearance, a subject of

little interest to young children. The book is illustrated with unimaginative photographs in an unsuccessful attempt to add reality to the story. There is much emphasis in the text on the poverty of David's family; yet in each picture the family appear well dressed and groomed, and they seem to be living in quite comfortable quarters. Even street scenes in Harlem do not convey the reality of poverty. They are just dull and drab, and could be any city anywhere. There is not one photograph in this book which suggests poverty as well as Marie Hall Ets' drawings do in *Mr. Penny*.

*My Dog Rinty* doubtless reflects Mrs. Ets' interest in social work, but one cannot help feeling that it would have been more successful had she done it independently and with her own art work. In all probability the social work flavor would then have evaporated and an engaging story would have resulted.

It is a pleasure to find Marie Hall Ets her own true self again in the delightful story, *Oley, The Sea Monster* (Viking Press, 1947). This is the saga of an appealing seal pup who loses his mother and has many adventures before he finds her again. Children will respond to Oley's grief and longing for his mother and the harbor by the sea where he was born. The sadness of this separation is relieved by Oley's success as the chief attraction at the museum in the big city far from the sea, and by the humor of the confusion and turmoil he creates when he is mistaken for a terrifying sea monster after he is set free in Lake Michigan. His safe return after a long trip through the Great Lakes, down the St. Lawrence River, and along the coast of Maine to his own harbor by the sea and to his mother brings the

story to a satisfying conclusion.

This book is animated with one hundred and forty drawings, one for each line of text, a feature which will delight children. Variety in the size of the illustrations adds to their appeal. Each simple drawing is filled with action and feeling. Only a very skillful artist could produce on this scale and maintain such a high level of performance throughout. The double-page picture map of Oley's long trip home adds reality to his journey, and incidentally is an irresistible lesson in geography!

*Little Old Automobile* (Viking Press, 1948) is the tale of a naughty little car whose response to every request is "No, I don't want to! I don't want to and I won't!" Children will recognize some of their own negativism in the auto's reactions and for a while may wish they



*Little Old Automobile*

could get away with as much as the car does. They will enjoy his run down the hilly road and the discomfort he causes everyone in his way,—a frog, two rabbits, a duck and two hens, a gentle cow, and a farmer's wife with a pig and basket of eggs in her arms. But children know instinctively that such irresponsible behavior cannot continue unchecked without calamity. It is almost a relief when Little Old Automobile meets his come-uppance in a crash with the big, black train. Little Old Automobile goes up in the air, just the way his own victims did earlier in the story, "but Little Old Automobile never came down

again. Just pieces came down." There is a quality of poetic justice in the tranquil peace with which his former victims enjoy the salvaged parts of Little Old Automobile.

The illustrations are particularly noteworthy. They successfully define in simple black and white lines the characters, the action, mood, and setting of the tale. Every one of them speaks affectionately of the bucolic charm of rolling, hilly farm country.

*Mr. T. W. Anthony Woo* (Viking Press, 1951) is well qualified to become one of the classics of young children's books. This is the story of a cat, a dog, and a mouse who live with a kind

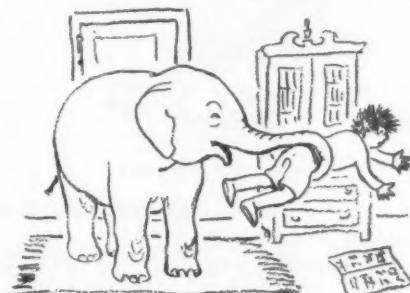


*Mr. T. W. Anthony Woo*

old man, the Cobbler of Shooska. The cat and dog fight continually, all but demolish the cobbler's shop in the course of their battles, and terrify the little mouse, Mr. T. W. Anthony Woo. An intolerable situation arises when the cobbler's sister, who hates animals, moves in to keep house for him. However, because of Miss Dora's fear of mice, timid little Mr. Woo becomes the reluctant hero of the tale and frightens her away. The dog and cat learn that fighting does not pay, and thereafter the

three animals and the cobbler live together in harmony and peace.

*Mr. T. W. Anthony Woo* is reminiscent of *Mr. Penny* (1935), involving as the earlier book does a kind old man with a family of mischievous animals. However, *Mr. T. W. Anthony Woo* is an even more



*Beasts and Nonsense*

convincing and satisfying story because the cat, dog, and mouse are more realistically conceived than the farm animals and because the plot development is more soundly based on the facts of animal life. Children also will particularly enjoy a laugh at adult's expense when they laugh at Miss Dora's terror of Mr. Woo.

The illustrations are distinguished by their humor, action, and expression. They clarify the folksy quality of the story and add reality to the details of the text. Mrs. Ets' unfailing skill as an artist is a continual pleasure.

*Beasts and Nonsense* (Viking Press, 1952) is a venture in nonsense verse, for the most part zoo-inspired. Each verse is accompanied by one of Marie Hall Ets' inimitable drawings. The humor of the verses, however, is rather sophisticated and adult, and of doubtful appeal to young children. Youngsters find zoo animals completely fascinating as they are and will



*Beasts and Nonsense*

not, I think, particularly enjoy the fun Mrs. Ets pokes at them.

*Another Day* (Viking Press, 1953) is a sequel to *In The Forest* (1943). Here we meet the same boy, with his paper hat and horn, again in the forest where he joins a confab of the animals. "Each one will show what he can do. Then we'll decide which thing is the best," Old Elephant explains to the child. Each animal performs and shows off one of his natural talents. The child stands on his head and laughs as he tries to pick up peanuts with his nose the way Young Elephant did. His laugh is declared to be the best thing of all. Again, the fantasy ends with Dad calling the child.

This is a charming story, and children will enjoy the sociable animals and their stunts. The illustrations are delightful, full of humor, expression, and action and up

to Marie Hall Ets' high standards of draftsmanship and composition. However, the story does not seem as successful as *In The Forest*. In *Another Day* the animals are introduced as a group. The reader never gets to know them as well as the ones in the earlier story. Also, featuring the child's laugh as the most wonderful thing in the world is surely an adult concept and does not reflect a child's feeling. A young child is no more conscious of the beauty of his laugh than he is of his appearance or the sound of his voice.

*Play with Me* (Viking Press, 1955) is happy proof that Marie Hall Ets continues to grow as an author-artist. This story of a little girl's experience in making friends with meadow and woodland animals is related with a disarming simplicity of great subtlety. There is deep understanding here of a child's yearning to play



*Play with Me*

with all creatures, the frustration which comes when the feeling is not reciprocated, and the exquisite joy felt when a wild crea-

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The Nineteenth Annual Reading Conference will be held at the University of Chicago from Tuesday, June 26, through Friday, June 29, 1956. The central theme is "Developing Permanent Interest in Reading."

ture loses its fear and responds, no matter how tentatively, to the child. This is the most real of all of Mrs. Ets' stories. The animals do not talk, think, or act as people do. They remain unchanged throughout. It is the child who changes, profiting from past experience, so that the animals lose their natural fear of her and "play" with her in their own quiet way.

The pastel illustrations, (Mrs. Ets' first use of color in her drawings,) are exquisite. The more they are studied, the more one appreciates their subtlety, superb draw-



*Play with Me*

ing, expression, and appropriateness to a gentle tale. A surprising amount of variety is achieved with a minimum of change in scene and situation. Each gesture of the child is meaningful, even the direction of her eyes. Slight changes in the position of the animals reflect the development of the story. The very restrained use of color somehow manages to illuminate each drawing. Most admirable of all is the way each picture captures a bit of the essence of beauty found in young children and wild creatures.

It is to be hoped that Marie Hall Ets will continue to bring her many talents to

the field of literature for young children. First and foremost she is a born storyteller. Her plots are simple and straightforward, involving characters and situations of in-



*Play with Me*

terest to youngsters. There are no extraneous details, subplots, or incidental characters to confuse young readers. Each character and incident is important to the development of the story, just as each word is essential in the text. A poetic quality in her prose adds to its charm and appeal. Fantasy is never abused with exaggeration. The imagination and humor characteristic of her work have their roots in reality.

The high qualities and skills which Marie Hall Ets brings to storytelling are equally matched by the artistry, good taste, simplicity, directness, and sensitivity of her illustrations. This fortuitous combination of talents makes her one of the outstanding figures in the field of children's picture storybooks. That adults, as well as children, can enjoy her books is an added tribute to her work.

[Editor's Note: Marie Hall Ets has just received recognition as runner-up in the competition for the Caldecott Award for her book *Play with Me*.]

SAMUEL A. KIRK  
WINIFRED D. KIRK

## How Johnny Learns to Read\*

*Poor Johnny! He and his problems in reading have been kicked about from educator to eye doctor to psychologist to speech expert to physician and back to the educator. Recently even parents—"doctor, lawyer, merchant, chief"—have entered the fray.*

Both parents and educators have had a lot to say about the place of phonics in the teaching of reading. It is probably not a question of "phonics versus no phonics," as Rudolf Flesch indicated in a recent book—a book described by its publishers as "an angry book by an aroused parent."<sup>1</sup> Few educators advocate *no* phonics, and few parents or educators advocate teaching reading entirely and completely by the use of phonics. This "angry book" has, however, brought the issue into clear focus by advocating an extreme use of phonics and exaggerating the opposing point of view.

But the problem is really not so difficult when we analyze the process of learning to read.<sup>2</sup> How does Johnny learn to read?

In the first place, he probably learns to read just as we learn many other things

---

Samuel A. Kirk is director of the Institute for Research on Exceptional Children and professor of education, University of Illinois.

Winifred D. Kirk (Mrs. Samuel A.) has been psychologist and clinical teacher and is co-author of *The Remedial Reading Drills* and *You and Your Retarded Child*.

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such as certain physical tasks. In trying to swim for the first time, for instance, one moves about in a generalized fashion, making many random and unselective movements. In this first stage of learning the whole body is acting as a unit. Later, in the second stage, the swimmer learns or is taught to differentiate certain muscles and select certain movements, perhaps developing each movement separately. He may practice proper breathing; he may practice his kicking; he may practice arm movements or trunk movements. In this second stage of the learning process he has to differentiate one part of the activity from other parts. But he must go on from there to the third stage. He never becomes a good swimmer until he can coordinate these different movements into one smooth operation. The various parts must work together and become automatic. All parts of the activity must become integrated into a smoothly operating total activity.

### Reading Processes

Similarly, in learning to read, Johnny seems to respond first to the whole word or group of words. In this first stage he seems to get an impression of the total structure of the word or group of words—a vague impression of the shapes of words, of blocks of letters with gaps between

<sup>1</sup>Rudolf Flesch, *Why Johnny Can't Read*, Harper, New York, 1955, 222 p.

<sup>2</sup>Samuel A. Kirk, *Teaching Reading to Slow Learning Children*, Houghton-Mifflin, Boston, 1940. p. 74-77.

them. One little Johnny, for instance, at the age of three was able to distinguish some two-dozen phonograph records by the general configurations of the labels. No adult was able to discover what clues he was using, but apparently he had some method of distinguishing one record from another without knowing a single letter or a single word. In this first stage he may not have known what the method was any more than the person trying to swim for the first time knew what he was doing when he paddled about trying to keep his head above water.

During the second stage of learning to read, Johnny begins to notice details of words. When he reaches this stage, he is ready for some form of word attack, the most systematic of which is phonics. If he confuses *sat* and *not*, or *man* and *ten*, or *boy* and *dog*, or *car* and *cart*, he may need some help in learning to recognize differences between words, of systematically analyzing the word from its parts and seeing how it is made up of smaller parts. Just as in learning to swim one has to pay attention to some of the details that make up the total activity, so in learning to read Johnny has to go through a stage of paying attention to the structure of the words. *It is in this second stage in the reading process that phonics can help.*

But if he is going to progress in reading, Johnny must get into the third stage of the learning process. He must go beyond the detailed analysis of words (whatever methods have been used in analyzing details). In learning to swim, one is not a good swimmer until the breathing and kicking and arm movements and body movements are integrated and coordinated into one smooth operation. By that

time the movements have become automatic and the swimmer does not think much about them. He just swims. In this stage of reading, Johnny "just reads." He has learned to short-circuit many of the perceptions and associations which he had laboriously gone through earlier. The use of phonics in the second stage enabled Johnny to see the word *map*, to associate the *m* with its sound, the *a* with its sound, the *p* with its sound, then to blend the sounds into the auditory word *map*, and finally to associate that sound with the meaning of the word. In the third and final stage, these steps follow automatically in a split second, or the in-between steps drop out and the total appearance of the word again determines the meaning just as it did in the first stage. At this point Johnny can understand the thought from a printed page without being aware of each word or the parts of each word. But until then he is not an efficient reader.

#### Misuse and Oversimplification

Now it so happens that the first stage and the third stage in learning to read have something in common. In both stages the individual is paying attention to larger units and does not break up the words into little parts. For this reason, some people who say Johnny should learn to read by the word method (or the sight method, or the look-and-say method, or the whole method) have neglected the second stage in the learning process. On the other hand, people, like Mr. Flesch, who believe that all you have to do is "teach the child what each letter stands for and he can read" are completely eliminating the first step and wholly ignoring the third step of the learn-

ing process. This would make Johnny begin and end in the second stage of the process, unless the child himself devises a means of going beyond it.

This is where Mr. Flesch has failed to understand the way children learn to read. As in other instances, he does not seem to comprehend some of the psychological bases for learning. In so doing, he has misapplied a technique which is very helpful to *some* children under *some* circumstances. He believes that *all* children should learn to read "by memorizing the sound of each letter in the alphabet." What is more, he believes that children should be taught these sounds at the age of five by their parents. How simple learning to read would be if this were all! This oversimplified and inappropriate method has had disastrous effects in many cases when used as he recommends. Hundreds of children have developed an antagonism to reading because they have become so hopelessly discouraged during the bewildering period of learning a bunch of sounds that they could not yet appreciate. Others have become befuddled because no one has ever taught them to blend a series of sounds into a word. This is an ability which many children and some adults have considerable difficulty in acquiring. Usually it can be taught, but without this sound-blending ability phonics is more confusing than other methods. However, the reader of Mr. Flesch's book is given no hint of this possible pitfall.

As one argument for the use of phonics in the initial stages of teaching reading, Mr. Flesch has stated that "there are no remedial reading cases in Germany, in France, in Italy, in Norway, in Spain —practically anywhere in the world ex-

cept in the United States," because every other country teaches children to read by teaching them the sound of each letter. It is unfortunate that the public should be exposed to such misinformation. We have visited some of these countries and have made a study of the German schools in an official capacity. We were particularly interested in the hilfschule (help school) classes which correspond roughly to our classes for the mentally retarded. In Germany the majority of the children in these classes are not mentally retarded, but are children who have not made progress in reading. No remedial reading cases in Germany? Perhaps they are not sitting in the regular classes. No, they have been shunted off to the classes for the mentally retarded! But they are there just the same, and we dare say every country has its share and has always had its share.

The German language is much more phonetic than English. Mr. Flesch recognizes but makes light of the fact that at least 13% (more than one out of every eight) words in the English language are non-phonetic, that is, are not sounded according to a consistent rule. And many of the essential common words are included in this 13% (*was, one, put, done, the, come, are*, and so on), so that Johnny is going to meet far more than 13% of words which are non-phonetic. He will probably meet one or two in nearly every sentence. How much better it would be to be honest with him and say that some words just cannot be sounded out and that these words will have to be learned as wholes.

#### Touche!

Although the Hegge, Kirk, and Kirk, *Remedial Reading Drills*<sup>3</sup> is one of the

few sets of materials for which Mr. Flesch has a kind word, the authors of this article would like to go on record as disapproving the use for which Mr. Flesch has recommended them. These *Remedial Reading Drills* as well as their counterpart in the form of Mr. Flesch's *Exercises* are not applicable as a sole method for teaching beginning reading. *The Remedial Reading Drills* were designed to help that limited group of children who have difficulty in the second stage of the reading process, that is, the stage where they need some help in recognizing details in the words. Most children acquire this ability independently. (It must be remembered that Mr. Flesch's Johnny is not representative of average children. He represents only one child out of 10 or 20.) When and if a child has needed such help, the *Remedial Reading Drills* have proven most successful. But to say that all the children in all the schools of all the land should use them at the age of five reduces them to an absurdity.

This is likewise true of Mr. Flesch's

<sup>1</sup>T. G. Hegge, S. A. Kirk, and W. D. Kirk, *Remedial Reading Drills*, George Wahr, Ann Arbor, 1936.

*Exercises*, most of which are condensations, modifications, or combinations of the Hegge, Kirk, and Kirk, *Remedial Reading Drills*. Although Mr. Flesch states that he "knew of a way to teach reading that was altogether different from what they do in schools or in remedial reading classes or anywhere else," he has promoted a series of exercises for which he has leaned heavily on the *Remedial Reading Drills*. The basic system is the same and the resemblance between the two is obvious at a glance. Unfortunately, Mr. Flesch has disregarded many of the basic psychological principles upon which the *Remedial Reading Drills* were developed.

Regardless of the propriety or the adequacy of Mr. Flesch's *Exercises*, it seems to the authors of this article that he has misused and oversimplified a technique which, if properly used, can be very beneficial to certain children. And it may well be that with a still greater number of children phonics should play a more important role and that it should be taught in a more systematic manner. But this does not mean that all children should begin reading by drilling on the sounds of the letters.

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When she could stand hearing no more from her fifth grade son in a Miami, Florida school about how much his teacher, Miss Stephanie Kornprobst, knew about English, a mother said, "I'll have you know that I was a major in English when I was in college." Faithful to the end, the boy replied, "That's nothing, Miss Kornprobst was a general."

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## The Shortest Road to Sentence Sense

In Poe's "The Purloined Letter" the Minister D— has, you remember, stolen a compromising letter from the queen. She saw him take it, and he guesses correctly that she will ask the prefect of police to recover it. The prefect will surely have him waylaid and searched by detectives disguised as footpads, and will also search the minister's quarters with microscopic care. So Minister D— turns the letter inside out, readdresses it to himself, and places it with some insignificant cards in a wall rack in his sitting room. As he expects, the prefect and his men wear themselves out in a vain effort to find the letter. A private detective guesses the trick, and steals the letter back.

We teachers of written composition are somewhat like the baffled prefect and his men. Naturally supposing that the cause of sentence fragments and comma splices in our students' writing must be something complex and subtle, we have sought it in their ignorance of grammar. We have told them that a sentence must be a complete statement, make complete sense; and, later, we have insisted that it must not only have a subject and a predicate, but that it must contain a single thought. The ineffectiveness of our procedure should have convinced us that we need to stop and do some fresh thinking about the problem. Perhaps we may well look in a place obvious as the minister's wall rack: our own mental processes!

We ourselves write in sentences because we think in sentences. We do not stop to think whether a group of words

fits the definition of a sentence. We hear mentally the sentence we are writing or are going to write; and when we reach the end, but not before, we unhesitatingly place the end signal—period, question mark, or exclamation point. The psychologists call this mental hearing "inner speech," because for most of us some vestigial movements of the speech organs are part of the process. This inner speech includes two kinds of pauses: short ones with sustained or rising pitch, and longer ones with falling pitch. *The period is the written equivalent of the pause with falling pitch.* The shorter pauses with sustained or rising pitch are usually represented by commas, never by periods.

Do children too have inner speech, and hear what they are going to say? Certainly. Even the three-year-old interprets correctly the pauses with falling pitch in the speech of those about him; and, except in special circumstances to be discussed later, he soon habitually uses these sentence pauses in his own speech. The youngster thinking how he will respond when his mother suggests that he has washed his hands on the towel hears quite distinctly what he thinks he will say. In school, when the teacher asks the pupils to think out sentences which will fit into a group composition on which the class is engaged, each pupil consciously hears the sentences which he will offer. If some pupil gets stuck in dictating his sentence, the teacher asks him to think it through

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again—that is, to go over it in inner speech until it is so clearly imaged that he will not lose track of it when speaking it before the group. In such exercises the children do not offer sentence fragments, nor sentences with spoken comma splices. Only rarely do they join by means of *and* what should be two separate sentences.

Why, then, when children turn to writing, do they put periods in the middle of sentences, where commas at most are needed? And splice two independent statements with a comma? *Because they forget or fail to notice the full pauses with falling pitch at the ends of their sentences!* The difficulties of forming the letters and of spelling the words compel attention to the words, but the pause-pitch pattern may never have come to the children's conscious attention. If they were properly introduced to reading, especially to oral reading, so that they "tell" the sentences, ending each with a full pause and falling pitch, they should be able to spot their sentence blunders by reading their compositions aloud. If they do not read aloud well, we must begin further back.

One effective procedure was publicized some years ago by Superintendent Bernard M. Sheridan of Lowell, Massachusetts, and later was used successfully under the direction of James F. Hoscic in a number of Chicago schools. First-grade children often, especially in moments of excitement, speak in a breathless stream of simple statements connected by *and*. To break this up, Sheridan asked each first-grader to tell one thing (about his pet, for example) and to stop; then to tell a second thing, and to stop; and to tell a third thing, and to stop. Finally the child repeated all the three statements, stopping as before.

(Nothing was said about pitch, but doubtless it followed the usual pattern.) When the pupils could do this he asked them to prepare and to give three-sentence oral compositions, which were criticized by other pupils and the teacher if the sentences were not kept distinct. The third step was to let the children write three-sentence themes.

This rather formal procedure completely eliminated sentence blunders in Lowell, where the great majority of the pupils were the children of immigrants. Also the tendency to speak in stringy *and* sentences was at least curtailed. In Chicago one enthusiastic teacher reported that during oral compositions the listeners "could just hear the periods falling on the floor." There are objections to this rather formal beginning, and still more to later stages of Sheridan's program. These faults, made worse by some mechanically minded teachers, led to the discarding of Sheridan's books and their procedures; but the basic idea may well be used for a short time where it is urgently needed.

Another, less formal, procedure is often followed by good primary teachers today. Children dictate sentences in chalkboard group compositions (always an account of an experience they enjoy reliving or some message they wish to send). Frequently, the group compositions are printed by the teacher on charts for early lessons in reading. With the aid of a few hints, the children "read" (remember) the separate sentences, and as they do so, they "tell" them with natural falling pitch at the end of each. Then they learn to recognize the sentences separately, still reading them naturally. As the pupils begin to read new matter in the pre-primer, they are

asked to look each sentence—usually a single line—all through and then to "tell" it so that the natural expression is retained. With the careful gradation of modern reading texts, this good oral reading can be maintained as the units grow longer. The writing of pupils who have been trained in this fashion shows very few sentence fragments or comma splices. Such pupils can spot any fragments or comma splices by reading their compositions aloud, or by listening to their inner speech in silent reading of the compositions if they have learned to attend to their inner speech.

Teachers in the upper grades are likely to feel that both Sheridan's method and that of the modern primary teachers are unsuited to their classes. Besides, there is danger that these methods will not enable the pupils to perceive the difference between comma pauses (short ones with rising or sustained pitch) and sentence pauses (longer ones with falling pitch). Some training in such discrimination may need to be part of the program. Attention to these pauses and inflections of the voice will also help poor oral readers who read well silently.

The teacher may begin by reading or speaking a paragraph without the normal pause-pitch indications of the ends of sentences. (This requires some previous private practice.) "Did this sound natural?" "Was it easy to understand?" Then she may repeat the paragraph with normal pauses and inflections. "Easier to understand?" "What was the difference between the two readings?" If the pupils do not hear the difference, she may repeat the paragraph (or use another paragraph). She may even have to ask the pupils how

many sentences there are in the paragraph. She may ask them to raise hands or to give some other signal when they recognize a sentence ending. All this should not be difficult if the paragraph does not contain comma pauses, but how far it must be carried depends upon the class.

The next step is to ask the pupils to prepare oral paragraphs, with particular care to have each sentence clearly in mind. Then the teacher asks them to count the sentences in these unwritten paragraphs, setting down the last word of each one if they have trouble in keeping track of the number. Some of the pupils deliver their paragraphs while the others try to count the sentences. Then she asks all to write their compositions and to be sure to mark the ends of their sentences. These papers the teacher checks carefully at leisure to see whether some of the pupils need to repeat all or part of this series of exercises.

Some of the less perceptive pupils are likely to put periods at some of the comma pauses. If such errors persist after the comma splices are banished, the pupils making them need practice in discriminating comma from period pauses. Again the procedure will begin with the teacher's oral reading and go through much the same stages as before. It need not be described at length here. If the older pupils can perceive that the pitch falls at the period pause but rises or is sustained at the comma pauses, that is good; but the only essential thing is that they shall be able to distinguish between the two kinds of pauses both in their voiced speech and in their inner speech.

If an oral composition contains a question, its special intonation pattern should

be noted. If questions first appear in the writing, the class may experiment with oral questions, to note the intonation.

Basing end punctuation upon full pauses and their accompanying changes in pitch, instead of relying upon grammatical analysis, has two advantages. First, it is simpler. The only probable difficulty is the possible slowness of some pupils in learning to differentiate between comma pauses and period pauses. Second, it accords exactly with the practice of the best

professional writers—and our own. It covers without any special allowances the *so-called* fragments in conversation or dramatic dialog, complex sentences with conjunctions omitted, ejaculations, and elliptical sentences, such as "The more, the merrier," without necessity of trying to analyze them. The principle that a *full pause with falling pitch is represented in writing by a period* never has to be revised or accompanied by exceptions.

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### OUR BIG STORM

One night last week we  
had a storm.  
But we stayed in and  
kept real warm.  
The wires went down  
and the lights out.  
There was no school  
and did we shout!  
Some friends came over  
and stayed for a while.  
And while they were there  
did the snow ever pile.  
My kitty was out and I  
called her to come.  
And when she came  
she really did run!  
Then on came the power  
and then did we shout!  
The lights came on and  
we blew the candles out.

By Ann McCormick  
(10½ years old)  
5th Grade

# Problems in Reading Encountered by Gifted Children

While gifted children are becoming recognized more and more, the time has still not come when adequate provisions are being made for them. The attitude that gifted children, merely because they are gifted, can take care of themselves is not one which will lead to the greatest development of these children. Unfortunately, however, it is an attitude which is commonly held by all except teachers who are faced with such children.

Gifted children, even though they are good readers, need reading instruction as badly as other children. Although half of all gifted children may learn to read before entering first grade, it is essential that first grade teachers build on the child's learning, instead of rejecting it because the child does not fit into the mold. It is indeed a problem to know what to do with such a child, but it is of the utmost importance that the teacher make provisions for him. If she does not, it is likely that the child will develop bad reading habits that will persist throughout his life.

Because of the likelihood of this development of bad reading habits, reading clinics show no surprise when a gifted child is brought in as a reading problem. Often the gifted child is not having difficulty because he is so far advanced. The amazing fact about such cases is that these children usually see no similarity between reading in school and reading at home. They may read newspapers and magazines at home, but never realize that this is

reading. Frequently when asked if they read at home, they will answer, "No." But when they are asked if they read newspapers or magazines, they will astound you by the wide range of their reading.

A gifted fourth-grade child who received tutoring at the Reading Center in Chattanooga this summer struggled through a series of books, none of which quite managed to stimulate him to want to read. But in response to the question, "Well then, what would you like to read?" he eagerly and with genuine enthusiasm said, "That book you are reading about crossing the Atlantic on a boat all alone." That wonderful book, *Single Handed Passage*, was certainly the exciting type of adventure which would appeal to boys of all ages. For Jimmy, who was never very excited about school, to be able to read a book, so obviously not a school book, would be a wonderful feat. Although the book was too difficult for Jimmy's wonderful mind, with effort he struggled through it with great pride.

## Materials Too Easy Is Greatest Problem

The greatest problem which a classroom teacher has to face with gifted children in teaching reading is that most of the material she will have available is too easy. The gifted child quickly becomes bored with the content of the material and refuses to read. This refusal is inter-

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preted as a problem in need of disciplinary action, and the child is punished. As adults, how many of us would be interested in the Tom Swift series or the Bobbsey Twins? And yet not too many years ago they were wonderful books for us. Many gifted children are as far ahead of their class in reading ability as we are above the Tom Swift level. Fortunately, as adults, we are spared the boring experience of being forced to read the Tom Swift series. Gifted children are not so fortunate in being spared material which is beneath their reading level as well as their interest level.

The primers and pre-primers and pre-pre-primers are certainly not challenging to many gifted children. But in a regimented classroom, every child must progress through these levels.

Perhaps the greatest mistake we make as teachers is that we fail to capitalize on that initial enthusiasm which children have for school. Having carried hundreds of children through the Muff and Puff stage, I feel little wonder that gifted children are bored in school. It is no surprise that initial enthusiasm is so often lost. The personal satisfaction and pride a child has when he first learns to read is indeed worth all of the problems and heartaches a teacher has to face. Unfortunately, for some reason, we are failing to maintain this pride and enthusiasm.

Perhaps one of the major reasons that this pride is lost is that the children, and gifted children in particular, are not being challenged by interesting material. Perhaps the "day at the farm" approach of so many readers is not the most interesting.

For gifted children to be forced to read in school is recognition that the material is not challenging to them. The addition

of more than one reading level in a grade, and a wide variety of materials, is absolutely essential if the gifted child is to be helped.

#### Gifted Children May Memorize

Gifted children have other problems in reading in addition to those which come about from their being bored. For the child to be bored, he must have first mastered the skills. Many gifted children, perhaps more than we would ever like to admit, actually have reading problems that make them appear even below average in intelligence.

The most common problem encountered among gifted children who have failed to learn to read is exemplified by a third grade child who came to the Reading Center recently. Gregg's mother accompanied him and explained that they had always thought that he was very bright. Even the first and second grade teachers had thought he was bright. His grades were straight A's in the first grade and almost all A's in the second grade—but that terrible third grade. Gregg could read in the first and second grade, but he must have developed some psychological block, for he couldn't read at all in the third grade. The teacher said that he was an average child—and the mother had come to believe that she didn't have the gifted child she had once thought she had. The child had developed, among other things, an intense dislike for school.

Gregg was given an individual intelligence test, and it was found that he had a mental age which placed him several years above his actual age. In reading, however, he was unable to score even at the primer level. It would have been dif-

ficult to determine whether the mother or the child was more bewildered by this sudden difficulty in reading.

In an attempt to determine the child's hearing comprehension level, a short selection was read to him. After only one reading, he was able to repeat it almost verbatim. He could then take the book and "read" the story. On longer and longer selections he was able to repeat almost the entire story. When the book was placed in front of him, he called it reading. But when the story became too long to memorize, he completely broke down. He couldn't remember exactly how the story began and was therefore unable to "read" it. With his very superior ability, he had developed an almost amazing capacity to memorize a story. Because the stories were short enough to memorize, he came to think that this was reading. He astounded his first and second grade teachers, and in their efforts to help those children who needed attention more, they had failed to realize that the child had not mastered the basic skills necessary for reading. When he reached the third grade, the material became too long to memorize. He was then lost and could not explain why he did not know how to read. The mother later admitted that she had read to him all of the stories from his reader. He could "read" them so much better the next day when she did this the night before.

Actually, the child was not capable of reading at all. His superior ability to memorize, plus a little help from home, had kept him from making any effort to learn the skills necessary for reading. The tragic day when he discovered he could not read was a traumatic experience from

which he may never fully recover.

Gregg learned to read. But his reading instruction had to begin at the very first part of the first grade. In a relatively short time he had mastered the skills and was reading at his grade level. Unfortunately, however, his attitude toward reading was never what it might have been had he learned to read earlier.

Gregg is not an isolated case. Perhaps, his case is more extreme than many others, but it is typical of what happens to some gifted children when they first encounter reading. The very gift itself in this case may hinder the child's learning if teachers are not careful to avoid allowing the child to memorize.

#### Verbalization May Become Problem

Because the gifted child possesses a large vocabulary and is fluent in his use of words, he may become a different type of reading problem. Without careful guidance from the teacher, the gifted child may resort to using words merely to give some kind of an answer. When a comprehension question is asked, without knowing the answer, the gifted child may try talking "around" the question and stumble on the answer. Instead of admitting that he does not know the answer, he tries to answer the question. This behavior may become a habit which can cause a serious reading problem in the content subjects.

An example of this practice is when, in reading, a child substitutes words. While these substitutions may or may not mean the same thing as the word, they fit into the sentence as far as context is concerned. Actually, the child may come to use this technique merely to get by, but the habit should never be allowed to develop.

### **Gifted Children May Ignore Little Words**

The case of Jimmy, which was described earlier, provides an example of a gifted child who ignored little words because he could comprehend what he was reading without paying any attention to the small words. In reading aloud, Jimmy would consistently miss *the*, *and*, and *a*. These were words which he had come to realize were not important in most cases to his understanding; so he did not pay any attention to them.

In order to overcome this problem, the teacher found it necessary first to be certain that Jimmy could recognize, at sight, the difference between small words. This is an instance where tachistoscopic training was helpful. After it was found that he recognized the words, he was given easy reading material which did not require him to struggle with any of the words other than the small ones. By means of an artificial scoring device which gave him a point every time he called a word correctly and took one away every time he missed one, Jimmy soon overcame his difficulty. The amazing thing about Jimmy was that he was not a slow child but probably one of the brightest children in his class. Because he had trouble with such easy words, however, he appeared to be a child who was not very bright.

### **Methods of Providing for Gifted Children's Reading**

Undoubtedly, a description of methods which will help provide for gifted children in order that reading problems will not develop is the most important information for teachers. Such information is logically the next step after pointing out the types of difficulties which do exist.

One of the most unusual types of provisions, and certainly one of the least effective, was that practiced by a teacher in a small rural school. The tragedy of this case was that she thought she was doing an adequate job. The class was divided into three reading groups. All of the children were reading the same story from the same book, however. The good readers would read the story aloud to the rest of the class. They would then sit down, and the average readers would read the same story to the class. They had already heard the story once and were therefore supposed to have been helped in their reading. Then, after having heard the story twice, the slow group would read to the class. Since they had heard the story twice, they were supposed to be able to read it. Even though the teacher claimed that this method was good for the class, there is great doubt that it helped any child. In the first place, there is every reason to believe that the poor readers couldn't even keep up on the page. But most important of all, the gifted child must certainly have considered such treatment punishment, for he had to first read the story and then listen to it twice more while the other children read it. If there is a better method of killing interest in a story, it would certainly be hard to find.

Another method which has been practiced widely is that of accelerating the child. This does not necessarily mean a double promotion for the child. It might mean only moving the child to a higher grade for reading. Recently in Chattanooga this was attempted with a very superior little girl in the first grade. Her reading ability was easily fifth grade level; so she was sent to the second grade for

reading lessons. Her comment after one period in this class was, "Why, they can't even read." It was certainly true that they could not read as well as she could. Since she did not fit into the second grade reading class, she was then placed in a third grade class where the other children towered over her in physical size. As could have been predicted, she still could read much better than the other children; so the problem was still present. The new problem was that the children were all using cursive writing, and she had not yet learned anything other than manuscript. Consequently, she is back in the first grade where she should have been left all the time.

But now that she is back in the first grade, the problem arises as to what can be done with her. Many of the things which should be done for her form the foundation for basic principles which should be adopted for the entire school. Enrichment is the keynote of the entire program for the gifted child in such a situation. The enrichment should be on a horizontal level, rather than vertical. The aim of the reading instruction should not be to see how far and how fast the child can progress. Instead, an effort should be

made to broaden the child's interests in reading. Within the child should be developed the interest in reading for information and pleasure, and not just the desire to show off a skill which is superior. Reading should be used to develop thought about what is read, instead of merely a desire to get through as many books as possible.

In the Major Work Classes for gifted children in Cleveland, Ohio, members have arrived at a rule all teachers should follow in teaching reading to gifted children. This was developed by one of the classes as a rule for their reading club. "It is not what I read, but what I think and feel about what I read that is important."

Since gifted children are going to be in regular classrooms, it is our responsibility as teachers to see that the reading program provides for them. It is important to realize that gifted children, too, may have reading problems and that steps must be taken to correct their problems, even though they may not seem as urgent as the problems of our slower children. Primarily, through the use of the library, every effort must be made to enrich the reading program for all children.

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Because our schools help shape the mind and character of our youth, the strength or weakness of our educational system today will go far to determine the strength or weakness of our national wisdom and our national morality tomorrow. That is why it is essential to our nation that we have good schools. And their quality depends on all of us.

—Dwight D. Eisenhower

## Language Arts Skills Needed by Lower Class Children

This study selects a few skills, usually well developed by the middle class child before he enters school, and attempts to show how much they are undeveloped in a child of the lower social class. It attempts to show how this lack of skill can add to his insecurity and lower his chances of success in school, since the usual city program is planned for the middle class child. And it recommends a program to develop these skills before the children start actual school work.

These children seldom have crayons, pencils, scissors, or paper to use experimentally in their home environment. And when a child does acquire enough skill in school to enjoy drawing, he usually appropriates some of the school's crayons and brings back pictures he made at home, on paper bags, pieces of pasteboard cartons, or the back of an older child's school paper, drawn, he carefully explains, with crayons he "found."

The kindergarten period appears not to be long enough for the development of finger muscle skills when one starts from scratch as these children do. At first, they seldom choose to use crayons or scissors. In a free activity program, they seem to make brief explorations with them, much as a middle class two-year-old does, more and more, until they have experimented enough so that their fingers do not tire easily and they feel able to produce a picture or cut it out. Voluntary writing does not appear until drawing has become

enough of a skill to be enjoyed. Often a great deal of encouragement is needed. It usually takes six months added to the kindergarten year. The usual first grade program with much quiet seatwork (often for forty minutes at a time) requiring the use of these skills could be discouraging and almost disastrous for some who are put directly into first grade rooms with no kindergarten experience.

There are almost no books, magazines, or even newspapers in their homes for preschool experimentation. Teaching any child to enjoy books and yet not destroy them is a fine problem of balance. Too much caution means that any enjoyment of them will not be worth the effort, and too little means the destruction of the books. These lower class children with the strength and swiftness of their six years are almost more destructive in their awkwardness than middle class two-year-olds are. As soon as they begin to enjoy pictures, they forget how to turn the pages. The care of books evidently has to become automatic before the books are safe. And this seems to take a much longer time than most people realize. After nearly two years of school, with many reminders of the special handling necessary, with ordinary caution used apparently with ordinary books, a beautiful new picture book on trucks was destroyed in less than fifteen minutes by a group of boys, so interested

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that they forgot to keep their hands from wrinkling the pages and (in their eagerness to show one another different pages) ripped them away from the back. Their remorse, when they realized what they had done, and their vivid interest in the book, usually so hard to capture away from the fighting, teasing, clowning and sex play interests developed in their homes, were worth the price of the book.

Possibly the answer to the problem is to give them old magazines and worn out books at first, just as middle class parents do with small children beginning to investigate the lower shelves and the newest magazines. Even then, possibly the school board should be resigned to spending more money here.

Another skill that appears to be visual and depends on much familiarity with pictures and books is the ability to avoid the phenomenon of reversal and transposition of letters and numbers. Edna Furness,<sup>1</sup> in a survey of the subject, says that most psychologists agree, "It is a natural phenomenon for very young children . . . to reverse forms without apparent heed to the position which they occupy in space." There seems to be quite a bit of evidence that this tendency disappears as a result of increasing maturity and experience.

In the first grade studied, thirty-two of the thirty-five children had trouble with this. The three who did not were middle class Negro children, who according to Allison Davis,<sup>2</sup> usually have home environments similar to middle class white children, and at least were familiar with magazines and newspapers.

It is difficult to understand that skill is involved in looking at pictures, but it

is not unusual in our school to find first grade children, especially those who have not been to kindergarten, at first turning their books upside down to look at pictures. Other children call their attention to it, and they soon learn which is right side up; so the tendency could not be the result of a visual defect. The four children who were still doing it the third week of school kept turning their Gates Reading Readiness test booklet upside down when working on the picture directions. In spite of the teacher's turning it back right each time they did this, they made no score. Twelve turned the book sideways as well as upside down on the pages where only words were printed. These made a low score, possibly accidental on the picture direction test, but none on the word matching test. Five more, who kept the booklet right side up all the time, also made no score on the word matching test. The median score for the whole test in the room was twenty three, placing the class in the lowest quarter.

Further research on the phenomenon of reversals and transpositions may prove them to have some relation to the development of the eye. But according to Olson and Hughe's tables for measurement of physical development, these thirty-five children are about average in weight, height, and eruption of permanent teeth; so it doesn't seem probable that their visual development would be so far out of line. There are usually not so many cases of this kind or so prolonged in middle class first grades.

The self-esteem of these children is so insecure that they are reluctant to try anything they cannot excel in. And they often

destroy good work that does not compare favorably with the best in the room. However, those who make the lowest level of drawings are very happy with their product and insist on its being put on the board beside the best in the room. Their satisfaction with their inferior product seems to point to a lack of skill in seeing as well as skill in the drawings mentioned earlier. Only five children draw a person as well as Gessell<sup>3</sup> describes the level of six year olds. From there they go down in skill even to the level that is only intelligible if the child explains which mark in which corner, isolated from the rest is the leg, head, etc.

Certainly it seems spelling should not be taught a child who is still transposing letters. He may learn to spell the words as he sees them. Words such as "play" and "from," frequently misspelled in their transposed form "paly" and "form," seem to point to spelling begun too early.

Language growth is a recognized factor in reading readiness. Recommendations for its growth, however, seem to be limited to the suggestion of giving the group experiences and then discussing them. Such a practice presupposes sufficient skill and interest to put experience on a verbal level. Most of these children have already had more experience than most middle class children. Of the nine children born in Michigan, only four had lived all their life in the town they were born in, without even a trip "down south." They have lived in various cities, most on cotton farms or in Texas in "an old house with owls upstairs where we pick tomatoes." As one child put it, "We got all the kinds of people there is in here but Chinese and Eskimos." Any middle class child with

these experiences would have a large vocabulary.

Dorothy McCarthy<sup>4</sup> in a survey of research on the problem, says, "As early as 1847, Degerando reported that the child of the rich understood more words and less actions. The child of the poor, less words and more actions . . . This has since been confirmed by a number of recent experimental studies." She also says that in no other aspect of development does the underprivileged child show his retardation so much.

There seems to be an actual lack of interest in words, startling to people accustomed to the eagerness most middle class children show in collecting new words and rolling them around their tongue. These children of low social class are accustomed to use few nouns, even for very familiar things, such as articles of clothing. They say "that thing" and when asked "what thing?" answer disinterestedly, "What you call that thing?" and forget its name in five minutes, unless a challenge of some kind is associated with it. Our interest in words alone seems to puzzle and even annoy them.

In a vocabulary test using a picture book of simple objects, ten children shook their heads at the picture of the roller skates, although they seemed to know what they were. One boy said, "Them the things you put on here," doubling up to touch his feet. All of the seven who could not name a cow have made the long trip "down south" and back and must have seen plenty of cows. Much time is needed not only to develop nouns, but also direction words, colors, and numbers.

Disputes have sometimes been called the cradle of language growth, and cer-

tainly these children find enough cause for dispute, but they are accustomed to settle them with their fists. From the first accidental, purposive, or imagined assault to the ego, person, or possession, until the bloody finish, not a word is said. No verbal accusations are yelled before the first blow, and no sermons are preached at the end. The struggle is weirdly silent. Sometimes in a quiet classroom a child comes to tell the teacher, absorbed with a reading group, that two boys are fighting in the back of the room. Unless they knock something over, there is no noise but their heavy breathing. On the playground with no restriction on noise, it is the same.

Possibly the cultural prohibition against aggression in the middle class forces children at an early age to realize the power of words and become anxious to acquire them. Whereas the lower class child finds he can do as he pleases if he is strong enough, and words are of little use to him if he isn't.

If time is spent, and it takes quite a few minutes, often at an inopportune time, to insist that the disputes be put on a verbal level, with each child taking his turn to state his case at the moment when temper furnishes urgency, a great deal could be done in the development of language as well as mental hygiene.

In a non-reading program, where there is free activity in a permissive atmosphere, not enough material, and a ban on fighting and grabbing, there is constant verbal activity, informal and free in small groups, with everyone participating. It seems this more natural development should be better than the usual room discussions when it takes a long time for each one of the children to take his turn to talk and

because the artificiality causes embarrassment for shy children.

The development of social skills cannot be measured well, but an attempt at appraisal here shows at least half the children who have not satisfactorily solved their earliest conflict with authority. Since about half do not live with both their own parents, their lack of growth in self-discipline is understandable. Physical punishment used almost exclusively by these people for restraining behavior may have something to do with the lack of growth in social responsibility. The emotional problems of these children can seldom be treated by specialists because parents are usually too unstable to keep appointments.

These are only a few of the problems of the children who live, "in neighborhoods, characterized by a high proportion of rented homes and a high degree of racial heterogeneity . . . most likely to be disorganized, unstable, lacking in a clear sense of social values and standards of behavior."<sup>5</sup> Sheldon and Eleanor Glueck studying five hundred non-delinquent boys for comparison with the delinquents in this type of neighborhood discovered two thirds were in homes where there are serious physical ailments, over a third in homes where one member of the family has a criminal record, over a third in homes where there is drunkenness, nearly a quarter in homes where one member of a family has a serious emotional disturbance.<sup>6</sup>

Low cost housing helps only those who can produce marriage certificates and credit ratings. Those who cannot, tend to accumulate in sections of the city closest to the big business areas, Frazier<sup>6</sup> discovered. He also found that the newly ar-

rived from the rural deep south joined them to become acculturated to northern industrial cities among those whom Davis<sup>7</sup> describes as outcasts from even the lowest social class. This acculturation must be an ordeal. Margaret Mead says that nowhere in the United States is there a culture so totally different from the rest of the country as in the deep south.<sup>8</sup> Twenty of the thirty five have families who are recent arrivals from there.

Shaffer's<sup>9</sup> description of non-adjustive behavior, "thumb sucking—nail biting—excessive readiness to react—irritable—" (he calls it a reaction to unsolved personal problems) is apt for nearly all thirty five.

Adjusting the school program, in even the comparatively unimportant details covered in this paper, to allow for growth and guidance in these skills, before attacking academic work, will not solve the problems of these people, but may, by reducing the load of adjustments they must make, even by a little, be a step toward solving them.

An experimental program in New York in Harlem<sup>10</sup> showed results that are encouraging. Children, allowed almost two years more than kindergarten for acquiring these skills, who did not start to read books until the end of the second grade, scored the same in reading achievement in the fourth grade, after only a year and a half

of reading as the control group who had been reading out of books for three and a half years. More than this, they scored significantly higher on the Winnetka Scale for Rating School Behavior in: social consciousness, emotional adjustment, leadership, responsibility, and cooperation.

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No other people ever demanded so much of education as have the American. None other was ever served so well by its schools and educators.

—Henry Steele Commager, in *Life*, 16 October 1950.

LOUIS ADA WILSON

# Aids for Learning Poetry

Somewhere in everyone there is a hidden spark that in time can be kindled for the joy of others. What better beginning can be found than with the young who are studying to be teachers!

College students are eager to succeed, and with the aid of a teacher can learn to love and teach others to love the beauty in poetry.

## Memorizing Poetry

Many have the opportunity to view the stars when they are clear and bright, sparkling in the distant blue. So it may be in many moments of life—thus the reason for helping the young to get in the habit of memorizing. The time to memorize is when one is young.

From experience it has been found that the "whole" method of learning a poem has lasting value. The following procedure in teaching the whole method has given real satisfaction.

The teacher presents shorter poems first. A first good impression is always desirable. She should read from the book unless she is able to recite well. Then students are asked to listen to the second reading for a line each prefers. Next they are asked to identify lines chosen. After the student answers the teacher quotes the line. Then the teacher begins reading again, asking the class to quote when she stops; reading again when the class stops; proceeding thus through the entire poem. (In this, no line or words are repeated. It is an even flow of the entire poem). The teacher continues by asking the student to

say from memory the alternating lines; the teacher reading the first line, and students the second line, and again an even flow of reading through the entire poem. Last ask the student with the most retentive memory or one certain to react to say the poem. The teacher assists when necessary, then calls on other students.

Such poems as "Clouds" by Dorothy Aldis,<sup>2</sup> or "Coin" by Sara Teasdale<sup>3</sup>, or "I meant to Do My Work To-day" by Richard Le Gallienne<sup>4</sup> are easy poems to start with. The effect is instantaneous, a bit startling; students respond with satisfaction.

One or perhaps two such lessons are enough to stimulate interest. It is always wise to explain simply the meaning of and the results one may expect from the learning by the whole method. It might be added one is relaxed when saying a poem and lets the mind direct (almost subconsciously) the flow of words. The trick is easy.

Experience shows that students are quick to learn short poems in this manner. Permit a class hour to be spent where each student has a partner, and a few of the short poems are learned in this way. Class time should also be given to stimulate

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<sup>2</sup>Dorothy Aldis, "Clouds," *Everything and Anything*, 1936.

<sup>3</sup>Sara Teasdale, "Coin," *Flame and Shadows*, 1920.

<sup>4</sup>Richard Le Gallienne, "I Meant to Do My Work To-day," *The Lonely Dancer and Other Poems*, 1917.

students to "clinch" their poems. This is a good time for the teacher to check complete learning by students.

#### Records Kept by the Teacher

Keeping records of poems learned is helpful for the list will offer suggestions for: 1, usable poems for presenting to other college students; 2, selections for programs or special days; 3, an index to students' interests; 4, revealing needs for widening the range of poems; and 5, giving an indication of extent of work or study accomplished.

From such records it has been noted that from 4 to 36 poems with a median of 12 poems were learned by one class. However, the mode was also 12 poems learned, while another class had a range from 8 to 19 poems memorized, with a median of 13 poems learned. When the teacher keeps records and the students are aware of this there seems to be a greater drive to succeed. The records of students are different. It will be found that some select a few very long poems; others will choose many exceedingly short poems; while a third will have a fine sense of balance and learn a wide assortment, short, average, and long poems, and some quotations.

The records of three different groups of children show that children also like to memorize poetry. The records show that: These three groups, totaling 64 children, learned 187 one verse (four lines) poems, 145 two verse poems, 151 three verse poems, 55 four verse poems, 11 five verse poems, 52 six verse poems, and 3 seven verse poems. The number of poems memorized by the individual child ranged from 2 to 26 while the central tendency was five, six, or seven poems memorized;

yet 31 children memorized 9 poems and one child memorized 26 poems.

#### Use Choral Reading

If there is present a music student or one studying voice, ask him to divide the class into three divisions according to voice pitch for choral reading. The teacher may do this very easily, too. The simple statements, such as "I don't know," or "Here it is, Man," or "I can't tell," reveal voice pitch, and thus the low, medium, and high voices may be grouped.

Then provide the students with mimeographed copies of poems with parts marked for each of the groups, asking them to read as directed. The effect without fail will be pleasing. Any number of poems can be used, or as class time permits. Poems by Vachel Lindsay, such as "The Proud Mysterious Cat,"<sup>5</sup> or "An Indian Summer Day on the Prairie,"<sup>6</sup> or any of the songs by Carl Sandburg, such as "Psalm of Those Who Go Forth Before Daylight"<sup>7</sup> are suggested for the first impromptu attempts. The same procedure may be used in reading a story effectively. "The White Goose"<sup>8</sup> by Tasha Tudor is a child's story that makes very charming choral reading, which becomes a more interesting phantasy.

#### Use Mother Goose Rhymes

The Mother Goose rhymes have a place in children's literature. The joy of the rhyme and the merriment of thought provide the stimulus, but in the teaching

<sup>5</sup>Vachel Lindsay, "The Proud Mysterious Cat," *Johnny Appleseed and Other Poems*, 1928.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Carl Sandburg, "Psalm of Those Who Go Forth Before Daylight." *Cornhuskers*, 1918.

<sup>8</sup>Tasha Tudor, *The White Goose*, 1943.

situation there needs to be a challenge too. So an important, yet lesser, phase of this learning is to help teachers to rise above mere repetition of the rhyme for its pleasure. A simple technique that challenges the students here is: Make an assignment. Ask the students to read Mother Goose rhymes before the next class hour. When the students attend the next class hour, have a list of questions, such as

1. Who slept under the haystack?
2. Who kissed the girls and made them cry?
3. How may hairs make a wig?
4. What did the little nut-tree bear?

The students write their answers. Then they are asked to substantiate their responses. The papers are *not* collected for grading. In this same class hour, ask each student to ask a question from a known rhyme. The students again answer on paper and then substantiate the answers. The class is delighted and joins in the fun. The young teacher can easily use the method in her class with children. However, with children the answers are given orally.

There are many Mother Goose books.<sup>9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14</sup>

#### Making Original Poems

Teaching the biographies of the poets helps to stimulate students' interest. Biography reports should be presented by both teacher and students.

<sup>9</sup>William Rose Benet, *Mother Goose*, 1943.

<sup>10</sup>Phyllis Fraser, *Mother Goose*, 1942.

<sup>11</sup>Rommey Gay, *Rommey Gay Mother Goose*, 1936.

<sup>12</sup>Feodor Rojankovsky, *The Tall Book of Mother Goose*, 1942.

<sup>13</sup>Tasha Tudor, *Mother Goose*, 1944.

<sup>14</sup>Blanche Fisher Wright, *The Real Mother Goose*, 1944.

After much study with one group of young college students, an occasion arose that challenged the students to write their own verse. On a beautiful morning, suddenly without warning, a blizzard broke upon the campus. Wind, snow, and rain came with unusual amount and force. The students were without galoshes, scarves, and heavy coats. They came trooping into class disheveled and excited but laughing. Then we wrote. The following are some of their poems. Four English teachers in the college selected those given here from thirty-three written. They are presented in the order of merit indicated by the college English teachers.

#### EARLY SNOW

The snow this year came early  
Earlier than I've ever seen.  
Instead of coming for Christmas  
It came for Halloween!

Arlene Karis

#### UNPREPARED

The years first snow came whirling down.  
The wind blew far and near.  
I didn't have my rubbers on.  
This happens every year.  
The flakes blew against the wall  
They covered field and tree  
By morning light. The earth and all  
Wore ermine just for me.

Helen Thompson

#### DO YOU KNOW?

Is winter here already,  
Since the ground is white with snow?  
The calendar says it's autumn.  
Do you know?  
The air is crisp and cold  
Winds are sharp and cold.  
The calendar says it's autumn.  
I can't tell.  
I can't tell.  
Do you know?  
The country should be golden brown,  
Instead it's white with snow.  
The calendar says it's autumn.  
I can't tell.  
Do you know?

Mary Halverson

## THE STORM

On the way to class it started blowing.  
The wind was howling and the trees were  
bowing.  
I could hardly see to find my way,  
Because the snow all around me lay.  
The cars were sliding around the block  
And so was I, up over my socks.  
I had no boots, no warm mittens.  
I felt like one of the three little kittens.  
My nose was running my eyes were wet.  
I could not see where my feet to set.  
I stumbled, staggered, and almost fell,  
But got to school on time with the bell.

Janet Bell

The original poem from the student usually comes after much study and reading. One morning, Ruth came quickly into the room. She said, "I made a poem. Write it down 'fore I forget it."

## MY TREE

As I was walking  
One morning  
I saw  
At the foot of a hill  
Where all was still  
A little tree.  
God had planted  
All for me.

Ruth Rahn

Knowing this highly intelligent child, one could see the child's subconscious leading her. She had heard read to her.

On the crown of a hill for all to see  
God planted a scarlet maple tree\*

There was also the influence of "Puppy and I."<sup>15</sup> Both of these poems were favorites of children. They ask to have them repeated often.

The following poem was written by a boy at Christmas time. In this poem the

child is influenced by two poems. One the children said often, because they like it.<sup>16</sup> The other one had been read once to stimulate children in the right attitude toward Christmas.<sup>17</sup>

## SHOPPING

If I had a lot of money to spend,  
I'd go straight to an apartment store  
And buy all kinds of things,  
A diamond necklace and a ring, too,  
And a bracelet, the glittering kind.  
I'd put them in boxes  
And wrap them up tight  
And tie them with ribbons,  
The prettiest I could find.  
I'd put them right under the tree  
For my mother to see  
The first thing on Christmas day.

George Augspurger

## Make Instruments of Instruction

Every member of a college class in children's literature needs to collect teaching aids for use in the class room with children. These usually consist of learned and liked poems copied for reading. These are organized under catagorical headings, such as "Weather," "Animals," "Boys and Girls," "The World About Us," "Doings," and other preferred headings. Also there should be some illustrated poems. These help in reading readiness as well as stimuli for reading poetry. The illustrations may be pictures cut from the many current magazines. There should also be a bibliography complete with author, title, name of publishing company and its location, price, and date of publication. This list of references of poetry books should be

\*Reprint by permission of Dodd-Mead Publishing Co., from, *Bliss Carman's Poems*, p. 270. Bliss Carman, "Trees," 1928.

<sup>15</sup>A. A. Milne, *When We Were Very Young*, 1924.

<sup>16</sup>Rachel Field, "Animal Store," *Child Craft*, 1949.

<sup>17</sup>Eugene Field, "Christmas Wish," found in Werner's *Readings and Recitations*, compiled by Stanley Schell, No. 28, "Christmas Book," 1902.

those that children may use.

The teaching aids could also include a series of questions that would challenge children to read *Mother Goose*.

These teaching aids are invaluable for the beginning teacher. She has organized the material and will be able to use them with facility and obtain excellent results. The many collections of poems in anthologies available for teachers are to be appreciated; yet the young teacher has to learn to use these advantageously as needs arise. This calls for more study and time, while the teaching aids made by the teacher herself are already learned and have only to be put into use. As the teacher develops, her teaching aids will also develop.

### Concluding

This discussion has been concerned with some of the phases in the study of poetry in a course in children's literature. The art of presenting the beauty of poetry for children is the responsibility of every teacher. Children love poetry because the teacher too loves poetry and has a method of helping them to develop a comparable love and understanding of words that give lasting value. She knows where to get

books for children. She keeps records to show "it" is important. She says poems from memory at the crucial time with joy and has an expectant look for the child or children. She stimulates them to think and enjoy the musical verse. Her reading or the children's reading relaxes tensions which often no other means will serve.

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### AN ALLEGIANCE

Carl Vaughn, 12  
William Chrisman  
Independence High School

Dance my ballet dancer,  
Dance to the music of the world.  
Dance to the gay playful music of children,  
Dance to the faster love music of the half-  
children, half-adults.  
Dance to the natural mature love music  
of the adult.  
Dance to the harsh bitter music of war,  
always there, an anonymous undertone.  
Dance to the music of an instrument as  
old as time.  
An instrument which rocks you in its arms  
caressing you with its love.  
An instrument that cruelly bends you al-  
most to the breaking point only to  
release you so that you may dance again.  
An instrument to which you swear al-  
legiance each time you move.  
An allegiance between a tree and the wind.

Taken from Spring, 1955  
*Missouri's Youth Writes*  
Published by the Missouri  
Association of Teachers  
of English

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Next in importance to freedom and justice  
is popular education—without which neither  
freedom nor justice can be permanently main-  
tained.

—James A. Garfield

## From Newspaper to Magazine

A fifth grade newspaper! Horrors, no! That was teacher's first reaction to the little boy's suggestion. True, they had begun a good story unit—but a newspaper was different. It seemed like such a large undertaking for fifth graders. Or was it?

After pondering the situation and weighing its possibilities from every angle, the teacher finally agreed to try an issue. What then, was the first step?

Two language periods were devoted to the study of local and school newspapers. Contents were noted. Arrangements of news items with the proper leads were pointed out. A selection of feature material to be published was made and departments set up with each department having an editor. The boy who suggested the newspaper was made editor-in-chief and a co-editor was selected who could be an able assistant. The remainder of the class became reporters.

Feature departments selected were: Science, History, Story, Sports, Fashions, Lost and Found, Weather, Book Review, Art, Puzzle, and Comic. We found that we needed a composer and a business manager. Reporters were assigned to class rooms to get the news. It was their job to write up the items. They learned about "by lines" in this way. Sometimes a class or individual in another class would submit a story already written which we would publish.

The teacher typed the first edition (five master sheet pages were sufficient). Oh, yes, there were other editions to fol-

low. Next time the better writers were selected to handwrite it. Later came the magazine issue which the principal and her assistant volunteered to help type.

Reporters were assigned to the rooms and went out on assignments during the pre-school period. In spare time they wrote the articles and turned them in to the editorial department where they were carefully corrected.

Most of the work was done and assigned during the pre-school time, in spare time, or during part of language or art periods, if needed. However, very little class time was required. The items were put into a large envelope when they had been checked and were sorted from there for duplication.

The children learned the necessity for making clear, neat copies on master sheet for the duplicator. The teacher found a few minutes during lunch hour when she could run them off. However, the principal and her assistant again helped in the "running off." As a culmination of the help, thank-you notes were written.

As the copies returned they were turned over to the business manager, who stapled and distributed them. He needed help. The new boy, who had not been there when assignments were made, fitted in here. Later he wrote special news items. Everyone had a job.

After "publication," the children criti-

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cized the issue in order to improve the next edition.

Of what value was it? Language took on a new meaning. There was a good reason for learning how to use words and punctuation. Every child had a part in it. Assignments took them to other classes where they learned how to conduct interviews. Children in the other classes also had a thrill out of seeing their news items published.

They learned better how to cooperate with each other in this larger undertaking. They had fun doing it, too. They learned requirements must be met and "deadlines" meant promptness. Some found that they would be interested in newspaper work for a life time job.

Contributions from other classes grew into the publication of a magazine. This one issue (one a month was our schedule) would include original poems, stories, articles, etc. from any grade. We notified everyone two months in advance so there would be plenty of time for preparation.

Now we needed a cover. An art period was assigned to the designing of a suitable cover. The best one would become head of the art department and the next six would be helpers.

One girl who showed original talents was put in charge of a "Things to Make" Department. Later we found we would need two others also in the Art Department and they were selected from the cover drawings also.

The best cover was transferred to the master sheet and duplicated. A few copies

were turned over to the new head of the department to practice color schemes. It was decided to use pencil crayons which could be painted over. When selected by the group, some were assigned to color with pencil while others painted over it with water, according to their own choice. Ours looked like a cover for the *Post* when finished.

New departments were selected with new editors for this one issue. That arrangement gave others an opportunity to take part in different work. A travel department and food column were added. Magazines do not carry news; so each reporter was assigned to four rooms to pick up material turned in. Two people were assigned to most departments thus giving further opportunity to work together. More stories were needed for this issue and those fine ones previously written in the story unit were used.

In an issue of our newspaper we also published a story written by a muscular dystrophy patient tutored at home in another district. This was a thrill for him, to see his work in print, and it gave him a feeling of oneness with a school which he had not previously had. The class was delighted with his work and asked him to edit the comic department when a boy moved away.

The newspaper also entered another school to be used as a model for their paper. Thus our work extended beyond our own classroom, giving an opportunity to be of real service to others. A fifth grade newspaper can be a huge success!

## Pony Express Participles

Participles and the Pony Express go together, because present participles always express running action. Mark Twain uses a participle in the title of his book *Roughing It*, and in that chapter where he describes the Pony as seen from the Overland stagecoach he uses one participle after another. "There were 80 pony riders in the saddle all the time, night and day, stretching in a long, scattering procession from Missouri to California, 40 flying eastward, and 40 toward the west, and among them making four hundred gallant horses earn a stirring livelihood." Each messenger "rode a splendid horse, kept him at his utmost speed for 10 miles, and then, as he came crashing to the station where stood two men holding fast a fresh impatient steed, the transfer of rider and mailbag was made in the twinkling of an eye, and away flew the eager pair." (Look out! There's a gerund hiding in ambush.) Both rider and horse went "*flying light*" "In a second or two it becomes a horse and rider, *rising* and *falling*, *rising* and *falling*,—*sweeping* toward us nearer and still nearer, *growing* more and more distinct . . . and man and horse burst past our excited faces, and go *swinging* away like a belated fragment of a storm!"

As an elementary exercise, a class might write a story in participles:

1. Leaping on his horse, the rider left

St. Jo. 2. Fording the stream, he climbed the left bank. 3. Whizzing by his head, the arrows missed the rider. 4. Dashing forward, he escaped the ambush. 5. Pointing his pony's head, he turned west. 6. Facing the storm, he carried on. 7. Reaching the station, he changed horses. 8. Slipping the saddle over the pony, he started off. 9. Plunging through snow, he crossed the Sierras. 10. Waving his hat, he passed the stagecoach.

The Sacramento newspaper for April 14, 1860, described the welcome to the first rider from the East.

First a cloud of *rolling* dust in the direction of the Fort, then a horseman, *bearing* a small flag, *riding* furiously down J. Street, and then a *straggling*, *charging* band of horsemen *flying* after him, *heralding* the coming of the Express. . . . Amidst the firing and shouting, and waving of hats and ladies' handkerchiefs, the pony was seen *coming* down J. Street surrounded by about thirty of the citizens . . . Out of this confusion emerged the Pony Express, *trotting* up to the door of the agency and *depositing* its mail in ten days from St. Joseph to Sacramento. Hip, Hip, Hurrah for the Pony Carrier! (Four gerunds here may be compared with the participles.)

The same use of participles can be tried in descriptions of roller-skating, ice-skating, football or basketball games, a horse race or cattle round-up, a description of a fast train, a forest fire, or jet planes. The swiftness of the race is caught in the participles.

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## For Every Lesson, Listen!

The art of listening, currently of interest to teachers, has always played an important part in the activities of human beings. Because of the impact of modern channels of sound, teachers nowadays have begun to re-emphasize the sense of hearing in connection with many learning situations. Boys and girls, of course, had ears long before the days of radio and TV, and while teachers do well to engage their pupils in critical, purposeful, and appreciative listening, they probably do not forget that this busy world has always been filled with sound—noises and music and voices and sundry other vibrations.

It may be useful to recall, therefore, some of the ordinary, everyday manifestations of sound, which the teacher, with a little reflection, can arrange into various lessons suitable for classroom use. These will serve to open the ears of boys and girls to the beauties and wonders of what they hear.

The child hears first the joy of his mother's voice. The grandsire listens with reluctance for Death's rustling wings. And in between, humanity is submerged in sound—pleasant or harsh or useful or ominous, but all filled with meaning for occupants of a busy world.

Hearing is pleasant. Nature resounds gratuitously on every side:

Whether we look or whether we listen,  
We hear life murmur or see it glisten,

How tuneful are the birds—the flute-like wood-thrush, the saucy cat-bird, the blue-jay, noisy and brash. How the wind echoes and re-echoes in the corridors of

Time, and with what an effect upon the feelings and the activities of mankind, and with what variety!

Wrote Thomas Hardy:

The thin grasses, more or less coating the hill, were touched by the wind in breezes of differing natures—one rubbing the blades heavily, another raking them piercingly, another brushing them like a soft broom. The instinctive act of mankind was to stand and listen, and learn how the trees on the right and the trees on the left wailed or chanted to each other in the regular antiphonies of cathedral choir; how hedges and other shapes to leeward then caught the note, lowering it to the tenderest sob; and how the hurrying gusts then plunged into the south, to be heard no more.

Wrote Romain Rolland:

. . . . with his hands under his head and his eyes closed, he would listen to the invisible orchestra, the roundelay of the frenzied insects circling in a sunbeam about the scented pines, the trumpeting of the mosquitoes, the organ notes of the wasps, the brass of the wild bees humming like bells in the tops of the trees, and the god-like whispering of the waving grass, like a breath of wind rippling the limpid surface of the lake.

These things are only a part of humanity's natural accompaniment.

Business and industry, too, provide many pleasant contributions. The whir and clatter of machinery, the bustle of traffic and hurrying footsteps, the bells and whistles of a restless world of enterprise—these to ears attuned have a rich and satisfying air.

Art and literature likewise please. The

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voices of symphonic music—the strings that soar, the vibrant reeds, the bell-like tones of trumpet and horn, the insistent rhythm of percussion—all these delight the receptive heart. So, too, do the sonorous organ and the cascading notes of the harp. And who can deny the joy of an untutored lad who thumps his drum with untrammeled persistence?

In literature, more especially in poetry but often in prose, the very sound of words brings an instinctive delight. The pleasing effect of rhyme is too common to require illustration, while alliteration:

Above the moaning wash of Cornish water  
Cold upon Cornish rocks

brings an added overtone of beauty; and onomatopoeia:

Sweet is every sound,  
Sweeter thy voice, but every sound is sweet;  
Myriads of rivulets hurrying thro' the lawn,  
The moan of doves in immemorial elms  
The murmuring of innumerable bees

combines, in this example, the figure of alliteration with its own imitative character. And even prose has a rhythmic beauty that is inescapable, of which the following from Edgar Allan Poe is but one example:

We are often made to feel, with a shivering delight, that from an earthly harp are stricken notes that cannot have been unfamiliar to the angels.

But of all the sounds that reach the ear none is more pleasing than the human voice when it utters the language of honor and affection. The poet Shelley wrote,

All love is sweet,  
Given or returned. Common as light is love  
And its familiar voice wearies not ever.

Poor and unnatural is the human heart that does respond, so deeply imbedded is this instinctive joy when aroused by the

happy outpourings of the human tongue. And this needs no further elucidation.

Hearing is useful, too, to aid mankind and to shorten his labors. All day long, and far into the night, we live, in part, by virtue of what we hear. The alarm-clock summons us to rise, the clock striking the hour warns us not to linger. A bell on the stove marks the three-minute egg, a thump at the outside door signals the arrival of the morning paper. The dog barks a rising welcome, and perhaps the cat meows for its bowl of milk. The sound of our neighbor's car, whether his tires grate on the gravel or rip through the ice-covered puddle, reminds us to investigate that "funny sound" we thought we heard in the engine of ours. As we leave for work, we pay attention to the horns of other automobiles, the policeman's traffic whistle, the train's bronze bell ringing for a crossing, thus avoiding any damage to fenders that crumple with so ominous and so final a sound. At the office, we use the telephone or the dictaphone; we listen to reports and observations and advice, perhaps over a public-address system; and if we own the business, we are not displeased with a hum of voices and many footsteps and the musical tinkle of the cash register and the sound of silver coin. Then, too, we are grateful for the floor-coverings that lessen sound, and the door-checks that prevent a slam. We note with satisfaction new, silent type-writers and insulated partitions and the ceiling that cuts down the noise.

At lunch in the cafeteria, we are familiar with the little bell that strikes when we pull a check from the machine, we approve of the microphone into which the counterman relays our order to the

cook, and we note a sharpening of the appetite by all the bustle and clatter of dishes and cutlery and the splash of water or the pouring of hot coffee. Even the buttering of toast sets up a pleasant scratch, while in the background as we enjoy the meal, soft music helps us to relax.

In the evening, too, when the work of the day is done, we settle down to enjoy a broadcast and by our ears as well as our eyes we enter a world of sport or entertainment. And then at bed time, we wind the clock and with grateful anticipation of a quiet rest, we compose ourselves to sleep, having murmured our solitary prayers, which we do not doubt will reach the capacious and understanding ear of God.

Hearing is profitable. Consider all the businessmen who make a living because there are things to hear. What an investment is placed in pianos and violins and clarinets and saxophones, to name but a few of the musical instruments! What publishers, what teachers of music! What income from the manufacture of fire alarm systems, clocks, bell systems as in school, radios and various loud-speakers, not to mention wire and tubes and microphones! And men find it profitable to make stethoscopes, hearing-aids, and dictaphones; while "high fidelity" receptors and recordings for them are in a boom market. Various electronic devices likewise are valuable, as sonar and other instruments, to evaluate sound. Even the

locksmith profits by his ability to listen to tumblers, many a piano-tuner or organ-builder lives by an educated ear, while the leader of a popular dance band knows only too well that he must please the general ear.

Similarly, the gigantic telephone and telegraph systems that bind nations and peoples are essentially dependent upon an acute ear among trained personnel. And profitable, too, in a spiritual sense, are all religious services—"Blessed are they who hear the word of God"—while among Roman Catholics the importance of auricular confession is well understood.

Thus, hearing enters into the lives of all humanity—the ornithologist identifying the songs of the birds, the stenographer taking down short-hand, the attendant putting air into tires, and the quarter-back calling signals to his teammates. It even affects those who seek not to produce but to lessen sound by means of building materials, rubber heels, "anti-knock" gasoline—and even "ear-muffs" to insure quiet sleep!

The world of sound is always with us, by day and by night. Teachers, therefore, should take advantage of its innumerable manifestations in order to enrich the atmosphere of everyday lessons. Boys and girls will then become interested participants in the auditory satisfactions of this teeming world; and for them, as well as for the teacher, the sense of hearing will be transformed into the art of listening.

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All phases of American society are beneficiaries of the educational system.... The contribution of education to the whole American culture creates in each segment of society a re-

sponsibility for its support and development.

—Resolution, Congress of American Industry (National Association of Manufacturers), December 1948, in *NAM News*, 21 April 1954.

## Stimulating Language Awareness

We English teachers hear a great deal these days about making students observers of their language, about developing in our students a "language awareness" or "language consciousness."

Right it is that we should be concerned with the oral language habits of our students. The pupil who comes to school with such substandard usage as "He don't," "He have," and who uses "them guys" indiscriminately to refer to both his gang and the Supreme Court obviously needs some help in improving his language habits. He also needs to be made aware that he is judged by the language he uses and that his language may have a very pronounced effect on his future success.

This paper deals with one technique which I used with my seventh and eighth graders to instill in them a consciousness of good usage. We employed a "Classroom 'Harvey'" of our own special variety to make us constantly aware of good language habits, and he worked amazingly well.

Our concern with good usage began during the first week of school with a discussion of the different kinds of language we hear or read every day—at home, in the halls, in the classroom, on the radio, in the newspaper, and on television. It was at this time that I found out my students previously had been exposed to the "Levels of Usage" concept. Since most of them had not, I read them examples of three different paragraphs, each of which demonstrated one of the three classifications of levels: substandard or illiterate,

standard informal or colloquial, and standard formal. Without identifying these levels or saying anything about them, I asked the pupils what differences they could observe in the paragraphs. Although they didn't know the formal labels, they were able to discern the differences very quickly, pointing out that one was "wrong" or "bad English," another was "awfully stilted," and the third sounded like "ordinary English." I informed them that they had just identified three different types of English which linguists call by other names (I put the formal names on the board but didn't insist on their learning them). The important thing, I emphasized, was that they be able to discriminate in their choice of language, and I used the familiar "clothes analogy" to illustrate: Just as we choose our clothes to suit the kind of activity we plan to engage in—whether it be a football game, picnic, or prom—so we should choose language to fit the occasion for which we are using it. I asked them if there were any differences between the language they used in talking to me in class and that which they used in the hall or cafeteria, and this usually evoked a few titters and giggles. If time permitted, I had the students pair off and work out dialogs in which they used a certain kind of language; the rest of the class then judged whether or not the choice was appropriate.

This preliminary activity set the stage

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for the entrance of our main actor for the rest of the year. Now that the students had at least an introduction to the "levels of usage" and the "appropriateness" concepts, they were ready to meet our "Classroom 'Harvey,'" *Rammarg*.

At the beginning of the class period I told the students that we had a new class member who would be with us for the rest of the year. I informed them his name was *Rammarg* and that he would have the last seat in the first row. Of course, there were a few other things they needed to know about him: First of all, I told them he was a hypothetical character—if they didn't know that word, they now learned it—who was going to listen to our English all year and tell us if we used appropriate language or not. However, since *Rammarg* was rather shy, not only could he not be seen, but he could not be heard either. For that reason, the rest of the class would have to help him out by interceding for him. Whenever anyone in the class would say something inappropriate or unacceptable, some alert class member would raise his hand and say, "Rammarg doesn't say, 'I ain't got no pencil,' he says, 'I don't have a pencil.'" I suggested that this would be one way that we could improve our English and have fun at the same time. I also suggested that since none of us knew what *Rammarg* looked like, perhaps some of the artists in the class—or anyone who was interested—might try drawing their interpretations of him, her, or it.

*Rammarg* somehow caught their imaginations. In each of my classes, several students brought in their interpretations of *Rammarg*, and the classes had an uproariously good time looking at them. The drawings ranged from "Little Lord

Fauntleroy's" to "Grampa Grammars." The students decided to vote on the best one; so after all the drawing had been posted on the bulletin board for a week, the ballots were cast, and one *Rammarg* occupied the position of honor on the bulletin board for the rest of the year. And of course the prestige of the artist was considerably heightened, especially when her drawing of *Rammarg* hit the junior high paper.

Our imaginary character was much more a part of our English classes than I had ever dreamed he would be. Whenever we had a guest in the room, or a new student joined us, an inevitable part of the ritual was for our class host or hostess to introduce *Rammarg* and explain his function. Or, if anyone tried to take the last seat in the first row, he was quickly admonished. "Don't sit on *Rammarg*!" or "That's *Rammarg's* seat!" If we were planning a picnic or party, someone invariably would insist that *Rammarg* pay his dues. If some ever-present prankster were at work, of course, "*Rammarg* did it." In fact, *Rammarg* was even elected president during our unit on parliamentary procedure.

Despite all the apparent frivolity connected with *Rammarg*, he also served a very serious and useful purpose. The students liked to speak for him and took great pride in being the first to notice when their classmates "made an error" or "used bad English," as they called it. In accordance with the procedures we had established, the student would repeat the inappropriate form and then tell what *Rammarg* would say that would be better.

Naturally, *Rammarg* was terribly overworked at first. Students wouldn't let

a thing go by unnoticed, and even the finest distinctions were picked up. The pupils suddenly became fastidious about their language and that of their classmates and proved themselves astute observers. However, because they were insisting on very formal language all the time and were so hypercritical, I cautioned them that in some situations informal standard was more appropriate and again tried to make the distinctions more clear to them. Also, because some of them listened only for Rammarg and neglected to listen for content, I had to remind them that *what* was said was just as important as *how* it was said, if not more so. I always insisted that we discuss content before we pointed out the "Rammarg's." Eventually Rammarg assumed his proper role.

We set up certain restrictions on Rammarg's activities, and on some days, when I felt we should forget about him and concentrate only on content, I told the class, "Rammarg is absent today." When there, however, he never interrupted a speaker; rather, when a speaker had finished and we had discussed the contents of a speech (and pointed out the good characteristics), I might ask, "Did Rammarg disapprove of anything in John's speech?" or "Did Rammarg hear anything inappropriate?" On one occasion the pupils were very proud when Rammarg caught the teacher—at which point I told them that, contrary to popular opinion, teachers were not infallible and congratulated them on their alertness.

Our hypothetical character popped up in other ways, too. Frequently on themes I would comment, "Rammarg doesn't say, 'One of the boys were,' he says, 'One of the boys was.'" Occasionally I would make

out an exercise based on usage errors noted in class in which I would say: "Rammarg finds something wrong with the following expressions he heard in class. Cross out the inappropriate form and write the appropriate one in its place." In tests, too, Rammarg often appeared in the section on usage.

Did Rammarg help the students improve their English? Although there is no objective measure of his effectiveness, there is plenty of evidence that he served his purpose well. Perhaps most important, he did make the pupils language-conscious; they really became observers of language, not only for one day or one week but all year long. They also became aware that language must be adapted to different social situations as well as to different kinds of communication. I think that Rammarg helped them to become conscious of good language forms and at least developed an awareness of what is appropriate for different kinds of situations. There is no objective evidence for whether they assimilated the appropriate forms after being exposed to them, but from my own observations, I am certain that there was an improvement.

Rammarg had another secondary advantage: he helped the students to learn from each other in a relatively painless way. He had a wonderful psychological effect on the seventh and eighth graders, for students who might have objected to being criticized by their classmates somehow didn't mind the criticism at all when it came from Rammarg. In a sense, he helped to give them a consciousness of language without a self-consciousness. Through him they could criticize and be criticized without anyone's feelings being

hurt.

Although Rammarg would be too juvenile for older students, he certainly appealed to my seventh and eighth graders. Even some of the eighth graders outgrew him, however, by the end of the year. And when it became obvious in some classes that he was no longer needed or wanted, we let him, like the "Old Soldier," gradually fade away.

Nonetheless, our imaginary friend was with us long enough to serve the purpose for which he was created—and he was a lively addition to our class as well. I do not guarantee that he would appeal to every group, but I do believe that he would be popular with younger children, too. I

am confident that he left his mark on my seventh and eighth graders, though it is perhaps a rather intangible one. Perhaps I am overly optimistic when I say that I hope their "language consciousness" went with them beyond the eighth grade. But I think it is safe to say that those students who met Rammarg two or three years ago still remember him, for I have had their senior high teachers ask me about "this Rammarg character" in my class.

And, incidentally, Rammarg performed another minor but useful service: Because of him, the students no longer had any difficulty spelling "grammar"—which, if you hadn't already noticed—is "Rammarg" spelled backwards.

WALTER T. PETTY

## Critical Reading in the Primary Grades

Merely pronouncing the words on a printed page does not constitute reading. As Gray has said: "The concept of reading has expanded during recent decades from a simple activity of one dimension to a complex activity of four dimensions—perception, understanding, reaction, integration."<sup>1</sup> That is, before the act of reading is completed, words and phrases must be received by the visual apparatus, be understood and evaluated, and be used along with past experiences in the process

of thinking and its improvement. Thus reading is a complex act of both physiological and psychological processes.

This concept implies that reading includes much that we commonly call thinking. Whether there is an actual distinction between the securing of ideas on the one hand and using these ideas in thinking on the other hand may not be of great importance, since efficient readers do think about what they read while they are reading whether this is a single complex act or several acts of lesser complexity. Actually "it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine the place where reading leaves off and only thought remains."<sup>2</sup> Even the relatively simple act of word recognition may

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<sup>1</sup>William S. Gray, "Growth in Understanding Reading and its Development Among Youth," *Supplementary Educational Monographs* (Proceedings of the Annual Conference on Reading, University of Chicago, 1950), Vol. 12, No. 72 (Oct. 1950), p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>Ernest Horn, *Methods of Instruction in the Social Studies* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937), p. 153.

be called thinking, since a word has its context in the past experiences of the individual and in other words that surround or are near it in the utterance and in other contemporaneous signs which affect it. Traxler points out, "Any conception of reading is inadequate that fails to include reflection, critical evaluation, and clarification of meanings."<sup>3</sup>

Types of reading, as well as types of thinking, may be classified, not only with respect to form and the reader's or thinker's general attitude, but also with respect to the specific purposes that lead to the reading or thinking on given occasions. For example, a child may read to find information relating to a problem or to follow detailed directions; an adult may read to understand a situation better or to determine the validity of arguments relating to a social or political issue. When the steps or processes involved in a variety of reading activities are analyzed, significant differences are noted. It is obvious, for example, that the mental processes involved in reading to answer a question which involves judgment are much more elaborate than in reading to answer a factual question. In the latter situation, one recognizes the various elements of meaning in a passage and identifies the particular word or phrase that answers that question. In reading to answer a question which involves judgment, a greater amount of analysis, reflection, and organization of ideas is essential.

Reading, thus, calls for a variety of skills which have to be adapted to fit the needs of different types of situations. Cer-

tain fundamental elements of word recognition, word meaning, and ability to deal with phrase and sentence units are involved in all reading situations. However, reading situations call for much more than ability to read words, phrases, and sentences. These situations involve many different kinds of higher-level skills, which vary according to the reader's purpose and the requirements set by the material to be read.

Of these higher-level skills one of the most important is the ability to do critical reading. Harris lists four types of critical reading that can be distinguished. These are: (1) "the ability to decide correctly whether a particular sentence or paragraph supplies information relevant to a question or topic . . .," (2) the comparison of two or more sources of information, (3) the consideration of "new ideas or information in the light of one's previous knowledge and beliefs," and (4) "the ability to detect and resist the influences of undesirable propaganda."<sup>4</sup>

Critical reading, then, involves appraisal, evaluation, selection, judgment, or comparison of ideas during the total process as contrasted to mere reproduction of the substance as it actually appears. This is a distinction that is a subtle but important one. There are pupils of all ages whose "reading" is largely literal. The reading may be selective in the sense that the pupils may not try to note and remember everything, but they are still engaged in direct recognition and faithful recall of something that is offered. Some of these children acquire considerable skill in re-

<sup>3</sup>A. E. Traxler, "Problems of Group Remedial Reading in the Secondary School," *High Points*, (Vol. XX, 1938) pp. 5-18.

<sup>4</sup>Albert J. Harris, *How to Increase Reading Ability* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1950), p. 387.

producing, not merely all the details but also a summary or outline of the substance; yet they still do little thinking beyond the accumulation of the ideas as they understood them. To really think while reading, to evaluate, to judge what is important or unimportant, what is relevant or irrelevant, what is in harmony with an idea read in another book or acquired through experience, constitutes critical reading ability. That this aspect of reading is related to—or is a part of—thinking, and more specifically critical thinking, is clearly evident when one considers that critical thinking "involves (1) an attitude of being disposed to consider in a thoughtful way the problems and subjects that come within the range of one's experience, (2) knowledge of the methods of logical inquiry and reasoning, and (3) some skill in applying these methods."<sup>6</sup>

Ability to do critical reading as described here should and can begin to be developed even before actual reading is done because of its relationship to critical thinking. Critical thinking occurs in problem-solving situations. As Dewey and others have said, "Thinking of a problem-solving kind originates in a felt difficulty, state of doubt, or perplexity."<sup>7</sup>

Problems which have meaning for children afford excellent opportunities for critical thinking. Young children should learn to recognize problems that need solving and to state these in their own words. They can think about what the different aspects of a problem may be—that is, what things are involved, what actions

<sup>6</sup>Edward M. Glaser, *An Experiment in the Development of Critical Thinking* (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, Contributions to Education, No. 843, 1941), p. 164.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

must be taken, what must be found before the problem can be solved. They can make some judgments as to whether it will be possible to find the answers to some or all of their questions. They may even begin to decide whether a particular source of information is reliable. Problem-solving in the primary grades deals largely with community sources of information, with people to whom the students talk, places which they visit, pictures or objects they inspect, as well as with printed materials which they read or which are read to them. In collecting information from any source, children need to make judgments as to whether the material answers a specific question or adds important features to their understanding of the situation being studied. Thinking of a constructive and critical sort is involved in fitting together the parts of the study, as various committees or individuals report their information, and in drawing conclusions or in making generalizations. If the problem is of the sort which should result in decision and action on the part of the class, critical thinking is also called into play in evaluating the results when such a decision is tested by action.

If the pupils in our schools are to develop reading ability of the type described here, the instructional program, from the readiness stage on, must be pointed in this direction. From their first contacts with children, teachers must be thinking not only of readiness for recognition of words and phrases and understanding of meanings, but also of readiness for critical or evaluative reading.

Too frequently, attempts have been made to develop critical reading and thinking abilities by the concentration of the

teaching of certain skills in a few lessons, usually at one of the upper grade levels. A program of this type is built on an erroneous concept, for "critical thinking is not a simple gadget that can be taught and acquired on the spot in one lesson, unit, or even one single subject. It is something like a way of life. . . . It is necessary to see critical thinking as a developmental process."<sup>7</sup>

The role of the teacher in helping children develop the maturity necessary to carry on activities involving thought and understanding is that of a guide and clarifier rather than that of an imparter of information and ready-made concepts. As a first step a teacher can help a child to know what he is thinking. This may sometimes be done by merely repeating the child's words, objectifying them, letting him know how they sound, helping him decide if they mean what he really thinks they mean. Or the teacher may rephrase what the child has said and ask, "Is this what you mean?" Sometimes she may inquire about where a child acquired a certain idea. From such simple questions as, "Did the person who told you this know that it was true?" and "What makes you think he knew?" may arise the beginnings of critical evaluation of sources of information.

Needless to say, all processes designed to clarify the thinking of young children should deal in so far as possible, with simple, real problems, with definite and concrete thoughts, with understandable feelings. This does not mean, however, that children should not be given teacher

help in order to understand as much as possible; they should be given serious attention and enough clues to help their thinking so that their natural curiosity will not be thwarted.

Important in the primary grades in teaching critical thinking is the fostering of an atmosphere in which problems arise and their solution is vital. For example, suppose that in a first grade classroom this question arises out of the discussion—whether the raising of the question was specifically planned for by the teacher or not—"What can we do now to get ready for a garden when it gets warm?" The first thing that would probably happen would be the giving of suggestions by various members of the class. If the teacher keeps a record with the children of these suggestions, an opportunity is present for fostering critical thinking.

The teacher might say, "We've said all these things that are on the board. Now, what was the question we had in the beginning. How many of our statements answer the question? Do we know that we can do all these things? Should we read what others might think we can do?" By bringing the class back to the original question as a framework for their thinking, the teacher is teaching a lesson in critical thinking. The children will thus be aware that the evaluation of materials read, heard, and observed must be in terms of the problem.

Through such a recorded treatment of the class conversation and discussion, a fundamental ability in critical reading and thinking can be developed functionally. Here children learn the necessity for developing ability to differentiate between statements which are only generally re-

<sup>7</sup>Hilda Taba, "Problems in Developing Critical Thinking," *Progressive Education* (Vol. 28, No., 1950), p. 614.

lated to the topic and those which actually help to solve the problem or answer the question.

Further development of the general problem topic of the garden might lead to such questions as: "Do we need a rake?" "Where can we get a watering can?" Such questions will lead to chances to differentiate between personal observations and generalizations incorrectly drawn from personal experiences, and thus, to differences between statements of fact and opinion.

As this type of pursuit of a problem continues, many other opportunities will arise for developing ability for critical reading. Various sources of information will need to be consulted. Ideas from books, interviews, pictures, radio and television programs, field trips, and other sources may be weighed and considered. The teacher can do much to set precedents for reading to solve problems as these sources are consulted.

Such techniques as those suggested here can set the stage for, and further the development of, the necessary maturity for more specifically defined critical reading and thinking. These things possibly relate to only a few of the components of what is called critical reading and thinking ability, but they are first steps in the sequential development of this ability. It must be remembered that any advance in reading ability is built upon steps that a child has already taken. Without these steps, we are in effect, trying to build a building without a foundation.

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Traxler, A. E. "Problems of Group Remedial Reading in the Secondary School," *High Points*, Vol. XX, pp. 5-18, 1938.

## Bilingualism and Retardation

Education of Spanish-speaking children has been a concern of the far southwestern states ever since the earliest phases of United States occupation. Today much is heard about the inability of bilingual children to "measure up" to educational standards. Research has been carried out on different language groups by numerous educators and students in the United States to determine the effect of bilingualism on intelligence and scholastic achievement. The findings, however, have been too inconsistent and too inconclusive to do more than throw some light upon the possible effects of bilingualism on the education of these children. There still exists the problem of teaching bilingual children in our present school organization. Since there is a scarcity of research instruments that are valid and the data are insufficient to serve as a basis for conclusions, researchers have been cautioned by both Tireman<sup>1</sup> and Cattell<sup>2</sup> about proposing final answers to the problems of bilingual children. Such being the case, there is need for more study of bilingual children.

The Spanish-speaking children entering our schools today, or a large part of them at least, are of the third generation, and where circumstances permitted, they have acquired much that is valuable to them by way of background as their par-

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Mrs. Wallace is a teacher in the public schools of Albuquerque, New Mexico.

<sup>1</sup>Loyd S. Tireman, *Teaching Spanish-Speaking Children* pp. 19-20. Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1951.

<sup>2</sup>Raymond B. Cattell, "A Culture-Free Intelligence Test," *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 31:161-79, March, 1940.

ents have made the transition from one culture to another. There is a change in the needs of these children, and in some respects these pupils are close to the same level of linguistic maturity as many of the Anglo children.<sup>3</sup> A knowledge of child-development and good teaching procedures may well apply to all children entering the first-grade. Language growth is necessary for the educational achievement of all children, and young Spanish-speaking pupils are not unique in this respect. What then are the conditions that cause retardation of these bilinguals?

The mere fact that bilingual children are labeled as such when they enroll in school is one condition that seems to imply these children cannot be expected to perform as well as others. This defeatist attitude about Spanish-speaking children is in direct contradiction to our modern conception of education. The consideration of the child is an ideal starting point, but very often it appears as if he is considered in the wrong light. The difference among children should be the spark of animation that stimulates group interest, not the line of demarcation that is often made between those who are able or unable.

Past research would indicate that good teaching will aid in developing language acuity, but such acuity also requires *time*. The child must be given opportunities to hear the language many times, to listen attentively, to imitate, and to feel secure

<sup>3</sup>W. H. Cooke, "The Segregation of Mexican-American School Children in Southern California," *School and Society*, 67:417-21, June, 1948.

enough to speak spontaneously. Not only is *time* an important element, but patience and provision for many rich experiences and opportunities for children to practice speaking are also very necessary.

Most teachers are aware of the value of all these recommendations, but here lies the weakness in an educational program that pays only lip-service to flexibility in programs that will enable teachers to spend the time upon background experiences before the *forcing* of reading. Public opinion about the shortcomings of public education is bringing pressure upon the first-grade teacher to begin her pupils' reading program before they are ready. This is making conditions worse rather than better. The *time* factor in the past (that suffered because of uninformed teachers who did not realize the value of language experiences before beginning reading) and the *time* factor in the present (that for the lack of courage is being ig-

nored) seem to be one cause for retardation of bilingual children who not only have to learn and add new elements to their culture, but also have to eliminate and modify existing ones.<sup>4</sup>

By way of summary it should be pointed out first that the educational problems of bilinguals parallel those of monoglots; second, that the defeatist attitude concerning the progress of Spanish-speaking children is detrimental to their linguistic development; and third, that one must have the *time* to use good teaching methods that develop the factors specified as prerequisites to good reading. All these considerations should automatically stimulate growth in proper attitudes toward speech and cultural differences as well as toward communicative arts.

<sup>4</sup>Uriel Weinreich, *Languages in Contact*, p. 5. New York: Publication of the Linguistic Circle of New York, 1953.

Character education takes place every hour of the school day. It takes place when five-year-olds learn to take turns with the new toy rather than to fight for it; in the opening exercises of the country school as the children are asked by their teacher to explain the meaning of "... with liberty and justice for all"; on the playground when the "gang" tells the trouble-maker to play by the rules or get out;

... in the eighth-grade history class which makes posters to illustrate the immortal ideals of the American Declaration of Independence—"all men are created equal . . . endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights . . . life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness"; ... in the high school homeroom as the students decide what message to send to the girl who has been stricken with polio;

... in the English class that studies Macbeth.

or the Vision of Sir Launfal; . . . on the class picnic, on the football field, in the rehearsal for the senior play, in the social-service project of the sociology class, in the community beautification project of the civics class;

... in the developing insights into the nature of truth in the geometry class and the physics laboratory;

... when a disturbed adolescent shares his troubles with a trusted counselor . . . when youth observe exemplary character in their teachers.

—Willard E. Givens, *The Public School, Annual Report of the Profession to the Public by the Executive Secretary of the National Education Association of the United States, 1951-52.*

# The Educational Scene

Edited by WILLIAM A. JENKINS<sup>1</sup>

## A note of pessimism

We end this year's jottings on a pessimistic note. The pitch has been set by Robert Lewis Shayon's declaration that the "Second Defeat of ETV" is at hand (the First was educational radio). With only 19 out of 200 reserved channels on the air after five years, with not a single, simultaneous program on the air, and with the imminent marriage (or it is *dalliance?*) between educators and commercial TV to point to, he seems more right than wrong.

Writing in *Saturday Review* for March 17, Mr. Shayon sees little hope for elevating popular tastes out of this union, but rather a levelling down of taste and behavior. The union, moreover, will have its share of rift and strife. Shayon cites Mr. Weaver of the NBC board to authenticate his stand. Mr. Weaver has said, "There will be no cultural programming that is not fought for, and that goes for progress of any kind. Sponsors are not going to ask for cultural programs. They are going to have to be sold it all the way. It's going to be very difficult and probably it will be a long time before cultural or straight information programming will have any really safe position."

Mr. Shayon suggests that the current view of ETV, with closed-circuit classroom TV, with programs on a fragmentary basis, and with colleges making independent program contributions, is unimaginative and short-sighted.

Aware as we are of the cost of programming and the problem of attracting top-rate technicians and producers to ETV, we have to agree with Mr. Shayon, pessimistic as he is. The defeat is ours. Perhaps, though, our withdrawal was strategic, not involuntary.

## Newbery awards record

*The Wheel on the School*, based on the 1955 Newbery award book by Meindert de

Jong (Harpers), is the first of twelve releases planned in this series, which will bring distinguished children's books to children in schools and libraries. We are most enthusiastic about the entire series after finding the first record exciting, suspenseful, of high dramatic quality, and faithful to the outstanding book. Producer Lee Corwin and Director Robert Lewis Shayon deserve loud and long hurrahs for this fine, bold, contribution to that neglected field, dramatic recordings for children.

*The Wheel on the School* is the story of six little children in the tiny village of Shora, in Holland, on the North Sea. Little Lina, the only girl in the village, wonders why no storks come to Shora, and then, encouraged by her teacher, she and the five boys begin to do something about the situation. This means getting a wheel so the storks can stay on the steep roofs in the village. Getting a wheel is not as easy as it might seem. Before it is obtained, the teacher is winded, the town villain, legless Janus, becomes a hero, and Grandma Sibble, Janke, the Tin Man, the Fathers—all of the village—are involved in a chase, two rescues, and a storm. But the storks do come to Shora.

Professional actors, six children and adults, do a convincing job with Alexander Marshack's fine script. The moments of suspense, tense excitement, and success should reach the child audience with full force.

The musical background is indigenous, furnished by the Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra. The music is ominous, stirring, gay, as the story demands, and is a vital part of the production. Sound effects—the only recorded stork "calls" in America, for example—are true-



William A. Jenkins

<sup>1</sup>Wisconsin State College, Milwaukee.

to-life. A horse, sea gulls, wooden shoes, church bells are among those sounds children can listen for.

A booklet of teaching aids is included with each record. That accompanying *The Wheel on the School* includes a brief history of the Netherlands, a discussion of storks, a story of the recording, a vocabulary list, pre-listening and follow-up activities, and so on. The recordings are 33 1/3 r.p.m. and sell for \$5.95, direct from Newbery Awards Records, 221 Fourth Avenue, New York.

We announce enthusiastically that the second in the series of 12 recordings now planned will be released in June. It will be *Carry On, Mr. Bowditch*, by Jean Lee Latham, the most recent Newbery Medal winner. Producer Lee Corwin will find it difficult to surpass his results with *The Wheel on the School*. We ask only that he equal it.



#### Reading readiness study

That formal reading instruction in Grade I is not necessarily beneficial to children has been shown in a study by Beatrice E. Bradley of the Samuel Gompers School, Philadelphia.

Using two groups of 31 first-grade children, Miss Bradley matched the experimental and control classes and studied them for a two-year period, giving them tests at the end of their third year. The control group was given instruction in reading in the first month of Grade I. The easiest preprimer was used at that time, and the children were given instruction in the usual first grade subject and skill areas. Planning, motivation, presentation, and review of the work were responsibilities of the teacher.

In the experimental group, the children were given reading readiness tests in March and December, and reading groups were formed when the children were ready for the complicated task. The room was arranged to provide for many centers of activity, interest, and levels of development. On the basis of

readiness test results, in the experimental class, instruction in reading was given to three different groups: the first, after five months, two formal lessons a week; the second, after eight months, three lessons a week; and the third, after ten months, daily lessons. Each lesson was forty minutes in length.

The study showed that by the end of the second year, children who participated in the readiness program attained a degree of achievement equal to that of the control group. Moreover, by the end of the third year, in word-study skills, basic language skills, and basic arithmetic skills, the experimental group showed some statistically significant gains over the control group.

The early start in reading and the time spent on academic subjects did not result in greater gains for the control group and might better have been spent in developing the children's emotional, social, and experimental background. Actually the experimental group's activities in oral language—planning, discussing, evaluating—the work in creative and manual arts, and that in democratic processes might be considered "bonus" learnings.

Commenting on the study, Miss Bradley says—in "An Experimental Study of the Readiness Approach to Reading," in *Elementary School Journal* for February—that "It becomes incumbent upon administrations and teachers to lend their leadership and support to activities which have for their purpose such a development of the child as outlined here. This leadership involves on their part an unequivocal indorsement of the principles of child development. Further it involves unremitting effort to alert communities to the need for adherence to those proved principles of child growth."

As mentioned in the review of *Eight More Years of Research in Reading*, elsewhere in this column, studies of readiness in reading must measure its many dimensions. This study indicates decisively that however great the task, the determination of readiness is basic to effec-

tive and efficient teaching of reading.



### Important source on reading

*Eight More Years of Research in Reading*, by Arthur E. Traxler, Agatha Townsend, and the Educational Records Bureau staff. Educational Records Bureau Bulletin No. 64, 1955. (21 Audubon Avenue, New York 32).

A continuation of *Ten Years of Research in Reading* (1930's) and *Another Five Years of Research in Reading* (1940-1944), the volume contains 760 annotations of research, textbooks, monographs, action research, and journal articles devoted to reading, grouped in twenty-three divisions. A great convenience to the teacher is the grouping of summary comments (104 pp.) into parallel divisions. Thus major findings in each general area are grouped together in both the bibliography and in the summary.

For the teacher, the Bulletin may clarify many points of misunderstanding and provide a firm foundation of facts upon which to base reading instruction. For example, it concludes that the evidence on the value of phonetic training is inconclusive; that while much evidence is available about type size, type face, and color and quality of paper, publishers are not making full use of this knowledge; that books chosen by adults for children are not always received enthusiastically by the young; that there is evidence that on the average, elementary school children like reading better than other school subjects; that simple devices and tests are as useful in diagnosing ability to recognize simple phrases of two or more words as are elaborate mechanical devices; that there are widely different and sometimes conflicting means of measuring speed of reading; and that even where instruction in length of time was equal, achievement in double session schools was not as great as that in schools having single sessions.

*Ten Years of Research in Reading* and *Another Five Years of Research in Reading*

were valuable tools for those of us who had need of information on the status of various phases of the complicated, and at times even bewildering, problem area. *Eight More Years of Research in Reading* deserves a place on the professional shelf beside them. The place should be handy, for this bibliography and summary will be used many times.



### Children's book club

*Mystery in Old Quebec* by Mary C. Jane (Lippincott) is the May selection of the Weekly Reader Children's Book Club (Education Center, Columbus 16, Ohio).

A year's membership in the club costs \$5 for the six yearly selections. During the year each member receives a membership certificate, "Reading Is Fun" bulletins, bookmarks, and a bonus selection. The most recent bonus selection was Walt Disney's *The Living Desert*.



### Newbery and Caldecott books

The Newbery and Caldecott medals, the top honors for children's books, have been presented to Jean Lee Latham, for the most distinguished children's book of 1955, and to Feodor Rojankovsky for the best illustrated children's book of 1955. Miss Latham wrote *Carry On, Mr. Bowditch* (Houghton Mifflin) and Mr. Rojankovsky illustrated *Frog Went-a-Courtin'* (Harcourt, Brace).

At the awards dinner in March, the medals were given by Frederic G. Melcher, publisher of the *Library Journal* and *Publishers Weekly*. The selections were made by the Children's Library Association of ALA.

The Child Study Award for 1955 went to Virginia Sorensen for *Plain Girl* (Harcourt), which was illustrated by Charles Geer.



### Tools for teaching

"Tools for Teaching—The Electronics Age in the Classroom," were assessed in the *Saturday Review* for February 18, 1956. Reading,

travel, and audio-visual aids were the tools reviewed. Positions were established by means of discussions by teachers, educational writers, and educational authorities in various parts of the country.

The teachers who participated in the discussions liked all of the various tools, but they had special praise for the tape recorder: for teaching self-criticism, for dramatization of events, and so on. They felt, however, that it could be overused, is a time-waster, can be expensive because it breaks down so often, and at times is frustrating because enough of the right tapes are not available.

Phonograph records came in for praise, too, with some unusual uses mentioned for them: painting with symphonies as background music; for foreign language, rhythm, singing, and phonics instruction; for storytelling and poetry reading.

Those schools which use local radio programs were lukewarm in supporting radio, while those who have a station in the system were enthusiastic. Television drew opinions equally as divided. They felt that ETV has not approached its potential and that some commercial programs were good, even on a hit-and-miss basis.

Films and filmstrips have improved, said the teachers. Advertising and propaganda have been unloaded, making them quite usable. In science classes, physical education, health and hygiene, safety, and industrial arts they are used frequently. On the other hand, films were criticized heavily: many are out of date, they are "small screen," they have too much repetition, math films go too fast, and there is not enough variety in literature.

The most used teaching tool, the textbook, came in for its share of wrist-slaps, even though most agreed that it is brighter and better than ever. The teachers were not so sure that texts are accurate or up-to-date. Literature books have been "jazzed up," they said. Modern subjects are left out in both science and literature

books. History books are not as dramatic as they were. And the vocabulary is ahead of the average child and does not challenge the gifted. Perhaps, they felt, sets of books at different levels but covering the same materials, might meet this need.

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As part of the "tools survey," David H. Russell wrote a brief piece titled "We All Need to Read." Dr. Russell stated that over half our adult population who live within half a mile of a public library, did not visit one last year. The actual figures on reading in libraries were: 48% read no book last year; 18% read 1-4 books; 7% read 5-9 books; 18% read 10-49 books; and 7% read more than 50 books last year. Their average reading ability (those over 25 years in age) was that of the ninth-grade student.

The 1950 Census found more than nine million functional illiterates in the country (those with less than five years of schooling who can't read or write well enough to carry out the ordinary business of living). Dr. Russell went on to say that a million of these people are in New York state, along with more than 400,000 each in California and Illinois, states with high educational achievement. And the rate is highest in our southeastern states. Small wonder, he said, that they can't read.

To parents who ask why the schools don't teach reading as well as they did years ago, Dr. Russell answered that they do and that the children are reading better than their parents did. But their not reading better than they are is a complex problem whose solution lies in a syndrome of behavior, not just in more of a single drill or remedy, such as phonics.

It lies neither in less, or more, TV and radio. Some people are sent to books by these media; fewer, according to surveys, are weaned away permanently. People will read if reading does something for them—gives them superiority or relieves inferiority; relaxes them or gives them competence; helps them get beauty

or provides esthetic experiences. But, says Dr. Russell, the kind of community one lives in, the friends he has, the job he holds, all determine the kind and amount of reading he does.



### Workbooks!

Workbooks can be either tools or crutches, according to Richard Madden. In a recent NEA *Journal*, he says they can be tools if the teacher can do nothing better and if the teacher doesn't have the time to duplicate materials. They can be crutches if all pupils do the same thing regardless of need and if the teacher relies on them and ceases to do developmental teaching.

The evils of workbooks are many. Children may spend time on them that could be spent on good literature, or in planning, creating, evaluating, or in numerous other productive endeavors. However, there are skills which must be pinned down. Except when assigned as "busy work," workbook exercises can do this. But the exercises must develop understanding in addition to providing practice.

A skilful teacher provides workbooks of different levels of difficulty. She uses the diagnostic provisions of the workbooks, and she limits the number of books and the time to be spent on them. She may find them useful in her weaker areas, but she never leans heavily on them.



### Advances in teaching English

*Advances in the Teaching of English*, though glacier-like in their movement, have been marked in the past 50 years. This position was taken by W. W. Hatfield in the NEA *Journal* for February. Dr. Hatfield, now retired, pointed to changes that have taken place since he began teaching in 1906.

Teaching has improved: the best is better than any teaching in the past and there is more excellent and less poor teaching. English teachers teach by giving student experiences and

help their students both to live richly and prepare to earn a living. They do this in a democratic atmosphere; they provide for the child in need of remedial work and the gifted one, but not by segregating them.

The influence of the language arts on each other is recognized. The need for skill-drills are met as they arise, and writing is measured by its thought content, not by deftness with mechanical tools. Language arts teaching, English teaching, according to Mr. Hatfield, is a challenging task. But it is satisfying. And it has made remarkable advances.



### New records

*Anansi, the Spider Man*, and *Harriet Tubman, Conductor on the Underground Railroad* are two new 78 r.p.m. releases by the Thomas Y. Crowell Publishing Company (432 Fourth Avenue, New York 16).

*Anansi* is a reading of some folk-tales by the collector, Philip M. Sheridan. It is for 6-12 year olds.

Mrs. Ann Petry, the author and biographer, tells 8-12 year olds about *Harriet Tubman*, the intrepid leader of slaves.

The cost of each record is \$2.95 net. Order from the publisher.



### Junior Literary Guild

Here are the Junior Literary Guild Selections for May through September:

For boys and girls 5 and 6 years old:

*The Little Fish That Got Away*, by Bernadine Cook. William R. Scott, \$2.25.

*All Ready for Summer*, by Leone Adelson. David McKay, \$2.75.

*A Cow in the House*, by Mabel Watts. Wilcox and Follett, \$2.

*The Long Hike*, written and illustrated by Dorothy Ivens. Viking Press, \$2.

*A B C of Cars and Trucks*, by Anne Alexander.

Doubleday, \$2.50.

For boys and girls 7 and 8 years old:

*The True Book of Airports and Airplanes*, by John Lewellen. Children's Press, \$2.

*The High Flying Hat*, by Nanda Ward. Farrar, Straus, and Cudahy, \$2.50.

*Exactly Like Ben's*, by Lillian Gardner. Franklin Watts, \$2.50.

*Gillespie and the Guards*, by Benjamin Elkin, \$2.50.

*Goodbye, Bunny Bangs*, written and illustrated by Dorthea Dana. Abelard-Schuman, \$2.50. For boys and girls 9, 10, and 11 years old:

*Family Sabbatical*, by Carol Ryrie Brink. Viking Press, \$3.

*The First Lake Dwellers*, by Chester G. Osborne. Wilcox and Follett, \$2.50.

*The Green Poodles*, written and illustrated by Charlotte Baker. David McKay, \$3.

*Riddles of Many Lands*, collected by Carl Withers and Sula Benet.

*Enchanted Schoolhouse*, by Ruth Sawyer. Viking Press, \$2.50. For older girls, 12 to 16 years old:

*Wild Like the Foxes: the True Story of an Eskimo Girl*, by Anauta. John Day, \$2.50.

*The Fire and the Gold*, by Phyllis A. Whitney. Thomas Y. Crowell, \$2.50.

*Blueberry Summer*, by Elizabeth Ogilvie. Whittlesey House, \$2.50.

*Wilderness Teacher*, by Zachary Ball and Myra Fowler. Rand McNally, \$2.75.

*Young Faces in Fashion*, by Beryl Williams. Lippincott, \$2.75. For older boys, 12 to 16 years old:

*Dogsled Danger*, by West Lathrop. Random House, \$2.95.

*Young Bill Fargo*, by Neta Lohnes Frazier. Longmans, Green, \$2.75.

*Too Many Promises*, by Ruth F. Chandler. Abelard-Schuman, \$2.50.

*Spook, the Mustang*, by Harlan Thompson. Doubleday, \$2.75.

*The Sea and Its Rivers*, written and illustrated by Alida Malkus. Doubleday, \$2.75.



### Publications received

*Teaching the Language Arts in the Elementary School*. Curriculum bulletin of the Hillsborough County Board of Public Instruction, Tampa, Florida. \* \* \*

Bulletin of Education, University of Kansas, Fall, 1955. Two items of special interest are "The Readability and Usefulness of Materials for Retarded Readers, Grades 4-8," and its companion piece for grades 7-12. The two investigations found that readability formulas provide good measures for the different levels of materials for groups, but do not perform adequately this service for the individual child. For him, another dimension, called "interest," must be added to refine the formulas. Generally, it was found that there is an indication that easy materials help to change the retarded reader's averse attitude toward reading.

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*Elementary Education*, Textbook Bulletin of the Akron (Ohio) Public Schools. Descriptive material on the textbook loan collection in Akron.



### NCTE Election Notice

In accordance with the constitution of the National Council of Teachers of English, the Board of Directors at its meeting last Thanksgiving Day chose Helen Olson, Helene Hartley, Oscar Haugh, James Mason, and Fannie J. Ragland as members of a Nominating Committee to propose officers for 1957. Through Helen Olson, the chairman, the committee offers these nominations:

For President: Helen K. Mackintosh, U. S. Office of Education

For First Vice-President: Brice Harris, Pennsylvania State University

For Second Vice-President: Harold B. Allen, University of Minnesota

For Directors-at-Large: G. Robert Carlsen, University of Texas; Mrs. Florence Rayfield, Irondale Junior High School; Nathaniel P. Tillman, Atlanta University; Marian Walsh, Louisville Public Schools; Lorna Virginia Welch, Southwest High School; Miriam Wilt, Temple University.

This slate will be presented for action at the meeting of the Board next November. Other nomination(s) may be made by petition(s) signed by twenty Directors of the Council and presented to the Secretary of the Council, with the written consent of the nominee(s), before August 16. When Miss Olson moves the election of the committee's nominees, other nominations may be made by members of the Board.



### Reading Workshops

The School of Education, Fordham University, will conduct an Institute on the Improvement of Reading in Schools, July 9-20. Two workshops sections will be held: Elementary and Junior High School, and Senior High School and College. Guest lecturers who will address the joint meetings of the workshop sections include: Dr. Arthur I. Gates and Dr. Ruth M. Strang of Teachers College, Columbia University, Dr. May Lazar and Dr. Frances M. Wilson of the New York City Board of Education, Dr. Gertrude Hildreth of Brooklyn College, and Dr. Arthur E. Traxler, Executive Director, Educational Records Bureau. The Elementary-Junior High School workshop leader will be Dr. James A. Fitzgerald, Chairman, Division of Elementary Education, Fordham University. Dr. Natalie T. Darcy, Associate Professor of Education, Brooklyn College, will conduct the High School-College workshop. The Institute will feature exhibits of reading materials and devices, selected reading films, and field trips to reading centers and clinics. For further information, write to Dr. James J.

### A Leader Passes

One of the great leaders and founders of the National Council of Teachers of English passed away on March 21, 1956 at the age of eighty. Dr. Allan Abbott was the fifth person to serve as President of the National Council of Teachers of English (1917-1918). He had been Professor Emeritus of English and former Head of the English Department at Teacher's College, Columbia University. Dr. Abbott played a key role in the development of the English programs for the rapidly growing

Cribbin, Director, Institute on the Improvement of Reading in Schools, Fordham University, 302 Broadway, New York 7, N. Y.



*Oral Aspects of Reading* (Compiled and edited by Helen M. Robinson, published 1955 by the University of Chicago Press) includes the Proceedings of the Annual Conference on Reading at the University of Chicago in the summer of 1955. Contributors are distinguished and experienced students of the reading problem, including many classroom teachers. The subject of oral reading has perhaps been neglected in recent years. This is a most timely volume.



*Eight More Years of Research in Reading: A Summary and Bibliography*, by Arthur E. Traxler and Agatha Townsend, is published by Educational Records Bureau, 21 Audubon Avenue, New York 32, New York. It is a sequel to similar studies covering the thirties and early forties.



*Reading in Child Development*, by William H. Burton, with the collaboration of Clara Belle Baker and Grace K. Kemp (Bobbs-Merrill, 1956), is done with Dr. Burton's usual comprehensiveness and vividness of style. Although the text is fully intelligible to beginners, there is much that is new and stimulating to experienced students of reading. Format is most attractive.

high schools of the time. The famous Hosic Report on Reorganization of English Instruction leaned heavily on his definition of the aims in the teaching of English. He has wielded a great influence on language-arts instruction in America. Of late years, he had served as an editor for the American Book Company.

Dr. Abbott was not only an intellectual leader of great influence, but he was also a man of great personal charm who was much loved.



May Hill Arbuthnot

# BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

Edited by MAY HILL ARBUTHNOT

*Mrs. Arbuthnot is well-known as a writer and lecturer in the field of children's literature. She is the author of CHILDREN AND BOOKS (Scott, Foresman, 1947) and three anthologies, combined in the single volume. THE ARBUTHNOT ANTHOLOGY (Scott, Foresman, 1953).*

**MARGARET MARY CLARK** reviews books of science, social studies, and biography. Miss Clark is head of the Lewis Carroll Room, Cleveland Public Library, and editor of ADVENTURING WITH BOOKS (National Council of Teachers of English, 1950).

## Two Important Reprints

*The Complete Tales of Uncle Remus.* By Joel Chandler Harris. Compiled by Richard Chase. Illustrations by A. B. Frost, J. M. Conde, F. S. Church, E. W. Kemble, and W. H. Beard. Houghton Mifflin, 1955. \$5.00. (All ages).

One of the most notable publications for the year 1955, both for children and adults, is this compilation of *The Complete Tales of Uncle Remus*, 175 of them with the original illustrations. It is a fat, beautiful book with clear type, good margins, excellent paper; and it is so bound that the 875 pages fall open and stay open at any appealing story the eye falls upon. Indeed that is the trouble. This review has been long delayed because the reviewer kept rereading old favorites and discovering new tales she had never seen before. A joyous experience! "De creeturs" are still up to their familiar antics, the wit and wisdom of Uncle Remus is as beguiling as ever. The little boy is a canny foil for the storyteller, the picture of plantation life that emerges is enchanting, and all are recorded by that master storyteller—Joel Chandler Harris.

It is astonishing to discover that these matchless tales were at first just fillers in a newspaper, *The Atlanta Constitution*, and the modest author was fearful of their success in book form. Yet after the first volume of the stories appeared, seventy-five years ago, a devoted public kept the author collecting and writing more of them for the next forty years. Here they are, all eight volumes of them.

Search the folk tale collections and where will you find such humor as you find in *Uncle Remus*? It is the humor of understatement, sly innuendo, tricks without malice, human nature on four legs; and (thanks to artists Frost, Kemble, Church, et al) *Uncle Remus* is irresistibly comic to behold in droopy vest, baggy pants, and knee-sprung pose. Study the conclusions of these tales when the little boy tries to pin Uncle Remus down



Margaret Mary Clark

on the veracity of his story or what happens next or its implications. The droll evasions, the witty pronouncements, and the sheer sagacity of those conclusions would put Solomon and Sheba to shame. Such wisdom and gay, grand nonsense are not to be found in such abundance in any other collection of folk tales anywhere.

Why then have they been neglected in



*The Complete Tales of Uncle Remus*

recent years? The dialect is the answer. But when the late A. A. Milne testified to the magic of these stories when read aloud to the boys by their British father, who are we to balk at that wonderful dialect? *Uncle Remus* with a British accent must have been something to hear! But after all, that dialect was phonetically recorded by a man with an unerring ear for the cadence and beauty of this speech. So from Maine to Montana, Minnesota to Missouri, let's tackle these matchless stories with the same joy that possessed the elder Mr. Milne. To miss reading them aloud in the family circle or the classroom is to rob our children of one of the richest of their American literary treasures.

Richard Chase, folklorist of the Southern mountains, has assembled these stories, added his own footnotes to those of Joel Harris and given the tales a sympathetic introduction. Nothing however, can equal the charm of the author's own comments about his books. In a letter to that greatest of his illustrators, A. B. Frost, he writes:

But, as frequently happens on such occasions, I am at a loss for a word. I seem to see before me the smiling faces of

thousands of children—some young and fresh, and some wearing the friendly marks of age, but all children at heart—and not an unfriendly face among them. And out of the confusion, and while I am trying hard to speak the right word, I seem to hear a voice lifted above the rest, saying: "You have made some of us happy." And so I feel my heart fluttering and my lips trembling, and I have to bow silently and turn away, and hurry back into that obscurity that fits me best . . . . .

. . . . . The book was mine, but now you have made it yours, both sap and pith. Take it, therefore, my dear Frost, and believe me faithfully yours,

Joel Chandler Harris (1896)

A

*The Ugly Duckling.* By Hans Christian Andersen. Translated by R. P. Keigwin. Illustrated by Johannes Larsen. Macmillan, 1955. \$2.50. (8-12).

Every well-illustrated edition of a single famous story for children is a welcome book in school libraries. Big collections of folk or fairy tales are for grownups to use with children or for the occasional superior reader. But the single story with lots of pictures draws young readers. Macmillan issued this charming edition of Andersen's *Ugly Duckling* to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the author's birth. The reproduction of the Danish artist's water colors are beautiful and the pictures themselves dramatic and genuinely interpretative. The only



*The Ugly Duckling*

flaw in this book is that Mr. Larsen's effective illustrations are not synchronized with the text.

This is disturbing, and for children under six it would be disastrous. Fortunately children old enough to enjoy this story will not mind so much, and will turn forward or back to find the right picture.

A

### History Illumined

*Carry On, Mr. Bowditch.* By Jean Lee Latham.

Illustrated by John O'Hara Cosgrave, II. Houghton, 1955. \$2.75. (10- ).

*Carry On, Mr. Bowditch* is a particularly felicitous title for this story of Nathaniel Bowditch, astronomer, mathematician, and author of *The New American Practical Navigator*, published in 1802 and still considered the Bible



*Carry On, Mr. Bowditch*

of navigation. This biography of an American genius is so skilfully fictionalized that it reads like a fast moving story of compelling interest. Born in Salem, Massachusetts (1773), this boy had no formal schooling after the age of 10, and at 12 his father bound him out as an indentured servant to a ship chandlery. Nat was near to despair, but his amazing gift for mathematics and his intense intellectual curiosities won the interest of the keenest men in the community. They loaned the boy books and indirectly guided his studies. One old fellow told Nat, "Only a weakling gives up when he is becalmed. A strong man sails by ash breeze." (On his own!) So Nat sailed. His studies and his note books grew by night, after long days in the chandlery. And when his indenture was

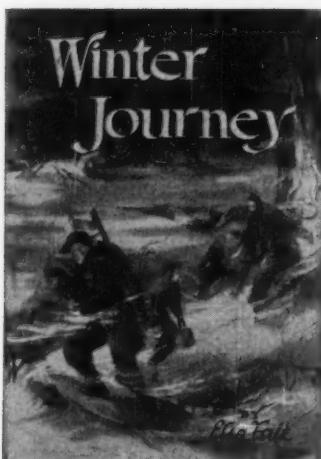
over, Nat sailed on the first of his long adventurous journeys, a knowledgeable young man with gifts not yet half challenged. The accounts of these voyages are tremendously exciting, in spite of the fact that the author gives clear accounts of the man's studies in astronomy and navigation. He found and corrected some 8,000 errors in Moore's *Practical Navigator*, which was supposed to be infallible. And above all, he conducted regular classes of instruction in navigation with the crew, which gave him practice in making simple, understandable explanations of obtruse formula. This practice accounts for the clarity of his own book when it finally appeared. There is romance in Nat's story too, some tragic and some extremely humorous episodes, and a rich background of life in a seagoing town where a "Widow's Walk" meant not merely an architectural addition to the great houses of the sea captains but the symbol of tragedy. The climax of this remarkable story is when the Harvard he had so yearned to attend gave him an honorary degree. Nathaniel Bowditch had sailed far by his "ash breeze," and young Americans should know his story.

A

*Winter Journey.* By Elsa Falk. Follett, 1955.

\$2.75. (12- ).

This is a story of incredible hardships even as hardships go in pioneer stories. But it is well worth reading for the vivid picture it will give modern children of the hazards of travel in early days and the resourcefulness of a boy. Chris Arp's father had gone to Minnesota territory to take up land, and Chris promised to bring the rest of the family safely up the river as soon as his mother was able to travel. But young Chris had not bargained for an overloaded boat, early ice, and an unscrupulous river Captain who forced a group of passengers to leave the boat on the icy banks of the Mississippi river with winter coming on. How they kept alive through the bitter cold was a miracle of endurance, desperate struggle, and resourcefulness. It was an old head on young shoulders



and some minor miracles that enabled Chris to bring his frail little family safely through to Minnesota and the anxious father.

## A

*Tim and the Purple Whistle.* By Julie Forsyth Batchelor. Illustrated by William M. Hutchinson. Harcourt, 1955. \$2.25. (7-10).

Children are going to like Tim Allen, even if he was a scare cat in the beginning. But then, leaving home to be a peddler's boy, without even your dog Bigsy for company is no joke. Fortunately, Mr. Josh Walker the peddler, was a kindly soul, and even forgave Tim and Bigsy when the dog insisted on joining them. But



*Tim and the Purple Whistle*

Tim kept forgetting Mr. Walker's admonition, "Never leave the wagon alone." Tim forgot several times, and finally, all the money was

stolen. That was a bitter day for kind Mr. Walker and still more bitter for Tim. How the boy and the dog redeemed themselves makes a hair-raising conclusion to a lively story of peddler days in the 1790's. A



*The Story of Valentine*

*The Story of Valentine.* By Wilma Pitchford Hays. Illustrated Leonard Weisgard. Coward, 1955. \$2.50. (7-10).

Of minor historical importance but gracefully told is the story of St. Valentine whose relation to our annual celebration has been almost forgotten. In Rome in 270 A.D. when to be a Christian was to jeopardize one's life, Valentine was a martyr. His story is told through the eyes of some well-drawn Roman children, particularly young Octavian and his little sister, Agrippina. Valentine let the children play in his garden, where they helped him with his flowers, listened to his gentle talk, and made friends with his pigeon, Smoky. Then, one day Valentine was gone. It was Smoky who brought the boys a message from the prison, and it was Octavian who with full knowledge of his peril made his way to the prison with one

of the Christian books rolled up and concealed in his toga. It was the book Valentine wanted, and the prison keeper's blind daughter Julia carried it into his cell. Then came a wonderful message to the boys, carried by Smoky. Julia's blindness was healed. The Book, prayer, and faith in the one true God had wrought a miracle. Leonard Weisgard's illustrations heighten the beauty of this little story.

A

### Fantasy for the special child

*The Magician's Nephew*. By C. S. Lewis. Illustrated by Pauline Baynes. Macmillan, 1955. \$2.75. (10-14).

There is always the special child who carries the fairy tale interest into the later years of



*The Magician's Nephew*

childhood, and demands complex fantasies, other-worldly but convincing. For such a child C. S. Lewis has provided the beautifully written series of books about the Pevensie children in Narnia. From the first book, *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe* to this one, which is the fifth, these tales provide enthralling adventures, magical, romantic, full of the conflict of good and evil but with plenty of comic relief. *The Magician's Nephew* carries young readers back to the creation of Narnia, when the Lion sang the world into existence. The Witch knew that music was more powerful magic than hers and finally fled. But Digory and Polly, the children, are entranced even though they realize they too must go. This story

has unusual humor provided by the antics of Diggory's horrid Uncle Andrew, the magician, and the upsetting witch. Nothing ever reforms Uncle, but when the dwarfs plant and water him, he is at least subdued. Not since "The Piper at the Gates of Dawn" in *Wind and the Willows*, has there been anything as lovely as Mr. Lewis' description of the beginning of life on Narnia. All of the books in this series are wonderful for reading aloud, but their devotees may prefer the swift, digging-into-the-tale process of silent reading. Either way, they are choice books.

A

### The Contemporary Scene

*Plain Girl*. By Virginia Sorensen. Illustrated by Charles Geer. Harcourt, 1955. \$2.50. (9-12).

Ten-year-old Esther was one of the Plain People, the Amish. She had been taught at home, but when the school authorities forced her father to send her to school, she found to her surprise that she thoroughly enjoyed it—the teacher, the work, and the children. Pretty, kindly Mary, who wore an entrancing pink dress, became Esther's best friend and the source of an amusing conflict. Should she, Esther of the Plain People, change clothes with Mary for just one day, and wear that glorious pink dress? Esther's brother Dan had run away from the strict home disciplines, and Esther began to understand why. Still she loved the plain ways



*Plain Girl*

and prayed that Dan would return to them. This is a sympathetic story of the confusions that beset a child from a markedly different social group. It is also the story of a shy little girl who learns to think for herself and to stand her ground with gentle firmness. Mrs. Sorensen has made another minority group understandable and real to young readers. A

*Tyee's Totem Pole.* By Terry Shannon. Illustrated by Charles Payzant. Whitman, 1955. \$2.75. (8-10).

Eskimo customs and ways of life are described in the course of this simple story. And the handsome, colorful pictures of the Haida Indians of Southern Alaska add eye-appeal and



*Tyee's Totem Pole*

graphic details. Tyee is determined to carve his own totem pole. His uncle is the most skilled totem pole artist in the tribe, and under his directions Tyee practices carving dishes, paddles, and finally his own beautiful canoe. Not until Tyee performs a notable feat is he entitled to his own pole, but when he catches the first great salmon of the Run, he has won that right. The carving of the pole and the Potlatch celebration conclude this predictable story.

A

*A Gallery of Children. Portraits From the National Gallery of Art.* Text by Marian King. Lippincott, 1955. \$2.50.

Marian King is well known for her excellent biographies of such varied historical figures as *King David, Joseph, Elizabeth Tudor Princess*



*Cess, and Young Mary Stuart.* In this book she has assembled twenty-one famous portraits of children with vivid comments on each painting and brief vignettes of the artists. What might be merely factual instruction becomes a warm and fascinating experience with each picture. The book should not only promote children's interest in portraits but help them to look more intensively at any picture. A

*Kim of Korea.* By Faith Norris and Peter Lunn. Illustrated by Kurt Wiese. Messner, 1955. \$2.75. (9-12).



*Kim of Korea*

American children should know something of the hardships that have befallen children in war-ravished countries. Kim is a good example. Somehow he managed to exist in the ruins of a house over-run with rats, with no glass in the windows, and one fireplace for heat. Then, the boy was befriended by an American soldier who promised to adopt him. But Len Minner, called "Ren" by Kim, had to be hospitalized, and in his absence, Kim is harried by an obese poet and his multitudinous family who rob and

threaten him. The boy runs away of necessity and sets off on the well-nigh impossible journey, afoot, from Seoul to Inchon. That is a picaresque journey that manages to reflect a fairly typical picture of Korean life today—the sick and maimed, the tumblers and entertainers, the brigands and thieves, the crowded market places, the wild barren land, but above all the courage of a stricken people trying to rebuild their lives. Kim like his countrymen, never loses hope in spite of dangers and sufferings that would seem unbearable to us. He finds his friend at last, and all is well. Useful background for the study of Korean life and an appealing story.

A

### Science

*Fire in Your Life.* By Irving Adler. Illustrated by Ruth Adler. John Day. 1955. \$2.75. (11 and up).

"Fire has brought many gifts to man. Since he learned how to use it, over half a million years ago, fire has been his most valuable tool." It has brought him heat and light, materials for building, utensils for his food, equipment for transportation, and all manner of useful products. The author traces the changes brought by fire from primitive man's uncertain experiments to today's achievements. The illustrations include many useful and informative diagrams of modern industrial processes. Entertainingly written, this title is one of a trio which includes *Time in Your Life* and *Tools in Your Life*.

C

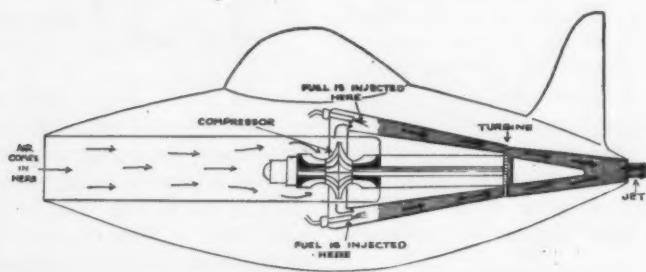
*Wonders of The Wild.* Written and illustrated by Jacquelyn Berrill. Dodd Mead, 1955. \$2.50. (10-14).

Here is a different approach to the story of wild animals as the author introduces them through the continents they inhabit. There are animals of tropical Africa, Southern Asia, and North and South America; and their ways of life in natural habitats are well described. African and Asiatic animals are more fully treated than those of the American continents. Information is excellent, presented in Mrs. Berrill's distinctive and lively style, and illustrated with finely detailed black-and-white sketches. The book is similar in format to the author's earlier titles: *Wonders of the Seashore*, *Wonders of the Woodland Animals*, and *Strange Nurseries*.

C

*Here Comes The Elephants!* By Alice E. Goudey. Illustrated by Garry MacKenzie. Scribner. 1955. \$2.25. (6-9).

Two little elephants of widely divergent backgrounds are introduced in this attractively illustrated book for younger readers. The small African elephant grows up in the wild, free life of the herd, while his Indian counterpart is raised in captivity, being trained to work in the teakwood forests. Good factual information is interwoven into the storied presentation, and it should offer a good addition to primary jungle units. Attractive illustrations are in black-and white touched with green. The book is similar in format to the author's *Here Come*



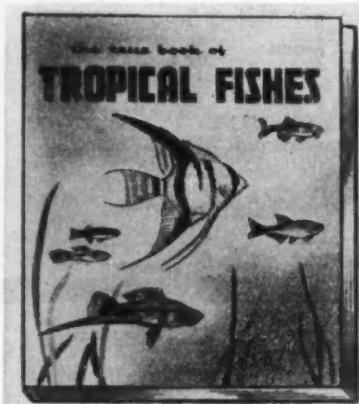
*Fire in Your Life*

*the Bears!* and *Here Come the Deer!*

C

*The True Book of Tropical Fishes.* By Ray Broekel. Illustrated by Rocco Dante Navigato. Children's Press. 1956. \$2.00. (6-9).

Broader in scope than the title suggests, this is an attractive and useful primary introduction to starting an aquarium and stocking it with freshwater tropical fish. Nine different



breeds are described, and reasons are given why they are good aquarium fish. There is helpful information on preparing the aquarium, and adding freshwater plants and scavenger snails. Illustrations in black-and-white and color are attractive and serve as useful aids to identification. Aside from essential technical terms the vocabulary is for primary readers, and the book is a worthwhile addition to science units in the first three grades.

C

*The First Book of Microbes.* By Lucia Z. Lewis. Illustrated by Marguerite Scott. Watts, 1955. \$1.95. (10 and up).

An exceptionally well-organized introduction to microbes describes their structure, food, water and temperature needs, and their interrelationship, whether harmful or beneficial, with other living things. The author uses essential technical terms but defines them very

clearly so that younger readers will comprehend. Excellent, well-marked diagrams of good size supplement the text. Some historical informa-



tion on the discovery and study of microbes is included, with brief biographical sketches of several outstanding workers in the field up to the present day. The book includes a glossary and an index.

C

*The Magic of Water.* By G. Warren Schloat. Illustrated with photographs by the author. Scribner's. 1955. \$2.50. (7-9).

This photographic picture book with brief text gives an unusually concrete introduction at the primary level to the importance of water among living things: where it comes from, and how it works for man. Introducing an average young boy named Andy, pictures and



text show how he uses water, as well as the water consumption of animals and trees. How water is provided to meet these needs, including the distribution of water to city dwellers, is clearly and simply presented. Other introductory science books by this author include *Milk for You*, *The Wonderful Egg*, and *Your Wonderful Teeth*.

C

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